

ROOTS IN THE WILDERNESS:
TOWARDS A MORE WHOLE AND HISTORIC MODE OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

ROOTS IN THE WILDERNESS

TOWARDS A MORE WHOLE AND HISTORIC MODE OF MINISTRY

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Problem. This project addresses the broader question of the nature of the current understanding of pastoral theology. It asks the question "What is the role of the minister in the contemporary society". More recently the role of the minister has been obscured by the advent of other forms of help, such as medical and psychological expertise, in the care of body, soul and mind. This has caused the minister to question what remains unique to his or her role. This role has been even further obscured by the failure of ministry, by in large, to formulate any clear, replacement for the Reformation role of minister as "preacher of the Word". This project will attempt to assess the current understanding of ministry and to rediscover a mode of ministry that is more historic, more whole and I believe more relevant as well. It will give particular attention to this problem as it relates to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Procedure. The method of the project will be first of all historical. Following the work of Urban T. Holmes and others, it will attempt to discover the shape of the roots of ministry. It will then attempt to trace that shape through the history of the Jewish/Christian ministry in a rather broad stroke fashion, that we might discover the way that original mode of ministry has been narrowed consistently throughout that history, and discover what it suggests for our contemporary understanding of ministry. It will then address some areas of promise in restoring the ministry to that original wholeness in a contemporary society.

Results. The resulting mode of ministry will offer a more receptive model.

It will suggest that that receptive mode of ministry is that which is lacking in our contemporary understanding of ministry. This figure is the liminal, threshold figure, which has its roots in the ancient shaman, and is rooted symbolically deeply within human consciousness.

It will suggest that this receptive mode of ministry has been replaced in contemporary society by a model that is largely the active mode of ministry.

Conclusions. The study will conclude that if we are to regain a more historical and whole theology of ministry, then we must rediscover the receptive/liminal side of ministry, thus creating a bimodal ministry. It will suggest that the minister acts within this receptive mode in a symbolic fashion, leading persons between the wilderness and chaos and the city and structure. This function can be understood as the minister is understood as "bearing God to the people", embodying the parable of Christ. This function is not so much what he or she does as who he or she is. The nature of that function is discovered with some clarity as we look at the place of the 'priest' in the anthropological studies of rites of passage and faith and moral development. These will offer areas of rediscover for this bimodal function.

PREFACE

The reader of this project will soon discover that it is in many ways confessional. For, it gathers the reflections of one who has struggled with the image of ministry and discovered some help in that "gathering" in the writings of a number of persons. Though it will be my journey, in the sense that it is organized around the questions and solutions which have been most meaningful for me in constructing a personal pastoral theology, I believe it will have broader relevance. As I have shared it with other clergy (especially Disciple clergy), I have found many heads nodding in agreement. This study has been for me a detailing of some of the things which lie at the heart of ministry; a call to a transcendent servanthood that embodies the one in whose name we serve.

These discoveries have taken me as a child of the sixties through many of the changes in thought and direction which characterized that decade and the one following. As many ministerial students growing out of the sixties and seventies, I found myself unsure of what my call or for that matter what anyone's call to the ministry meant. The questions were ones like "In what ways was I different?" "What does it mean to be a minister?" Not original questions to be sure, but these questions were particularly obscured for those who would be preparing for ministry during the seventies, because of the confusion which characterized the ministry and the church as a whole.

My own "call" had, as had many others, developed out of a series of "camp highs" and nebulous feelings of caring communities of youth

with whom I shared those events and who made up the youth group of my local church. Most important to those experiences, however, were two special persons, both of whom were ministers. These two would become for me symbols of ministry. They would somehow symbolize the vocation to which I was called.

When both eventually left the ministry, I found myself having to reconsider, more critically, the nature of ministry. They symbolize two areas of concern in this study. One of the ministers left the ministry over what I will suggest is an issue of clergy support and the nature of ministerial call. He was asked by his church to leave when he sought to divorce his wife, who had been institutionalized for a number of years in an acute ward of a mental health facility. This raised the nature of call in a way that is especially important for those denominations like the Disciples of Christ who are largely congregationally based. The question is "does the ministerial call consist only in the contract between the local church and the minister?" I found the symbolic validity of my friend's ministry no less after he lost his 'congregational call.'

The other minister symbolizes what I will explore as the confused state of ministerial identity today. He finally left the parish ministry to pursue a secular counseling job. I believe this decision was prompted after struggling for many years to discover his place as a minister in a society which held little esteem for the minister. His approach to this confusion and loss of esteem was to look for ways to "be like everyone else." That sometimes took the form of dress and action that were more consistent with secular professionals. Vocationally, it took the form of involvement in the "professionally acceptable"

functions of counseling and social activism. But he never found a suitable mode of ministry to combat charges of irrelevancy spoken from without and within. These two persons represent two elements of ministry's contemporary problem which will be addressed in this study.

No less confusing nor any more holy was my own journey in preparation for ministry. I came to seminary proud of the image of "can you believe he's a minister?" I sought seminaries based, in large part, on their reputation in pastoral counseling circles. The early years of my seminary training were heavily weighted with courses in counseling and later in social action and Christian community involvement. These were avenues which my other "professional" friends would respect and honor. And there were, I rationalized, tasks which were central to the ministry.

Gradually in my seminary training, I became uncomfortable with these foci and with my own image of ministry. I began to become aware that I was seeking to justify my profession and yet all the time denying its real validity. I began to discover that neither pastoral counseling nor global involvement were the areas in which ministry was grounded. They were important but they were not ministry's "reason for existing." To the extent that they had become identified in this way they had become "demonic". For I had made the general out of the specific and that is always demonic when they are given the transcendent character of religious validity.

Gradually, I began to discover a need in my own life that was more spiritual. That occurred even as this paper was being written. Over the two year period since its inception, it has taken a markedly different approach than its original draft would suggest. It has moved

from a thesis more interested in discovering ways for the individual to develop morally and in the minister's involvement in that task; to a focus more interested in a ministry that enables people to enter the liminal; to journey into the spiritual wilderness and to return more whole. It is to that task that this project will be directed. I hope that you as readers will be expecting not so much a careful exposition of abstract problems and solutions as reflections of one who has explored the slipping image of ministry and sought to discover some answers which can be tried. I hope it will both provide for the reader some clarity about the current problems in ministry, and some directions for a more empowered and whole ministry.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of those identified as "set aside" as religious leaders, there have been few concepts which have served to shape the self-understanding and role definitions of those persons more than the function of the minister in the cure of souls. That understanding has shaped the "theology of ministry" in major ways throughout the history of the Christian faith as well. It has asked "What is the role of the priest in the salvation of the human soul?"

Statement of Purpose

This project will center around that age old question of ministry, seeking to ask it for today's clergy. It will look at the current understanding of ministry to struggling souls. As one traces the history of the "cure of souls", it becomes apparent how central that history is to the priest's understanding of his or her office and to the minister's perspective for ministry to his or her parishioners. Though it has taken various forms, the centrality of the focus on the cure of souls has seldom been far from the ministries self-understanding in any age.

It was out of this function that the religious leader emerged in the form of the ancient shaman and holymen. It is with such a self-understanding that the religious leaders of the Hebrew people began the line of ministry out of which the Judeo-Christian ministry has grown. Few concepts reveal more about the nature of Christ's

ministry than "the salvation of the soul". And, such struggles and the questions about their practical implications helped shape the writings of the New Testament and of the Church Fathers. The focus on the salvation of the soul provided impetus and purpose for the religious orders formation. Finally, the question of the nature of the minister in the salvific process was central in the struggles which began the reformation and shaped its course. Therefore its historical importance can scarcely be questioned.

Statement of Problem

However, the problem which we will address, is that more recently the role of ministry in the cure of souls has suffered from a narrowing of its historical dimension and a lack of clarity regarding its function. This confusion is part of a larger "identity crisis" among many mainline clergy. This identity crisis and confusion have emerged in the contemporary ministry for several reasons. First, is the confusion that even now exists for many Protestant clergy as they attempt to understand their unique ministry within traditions which affirm the "priesthood of all believers". The question raised is "how does one understand his or her function in the guidance of and ministry to the parishioner struggling with salvation when all are accorded equal access to the healing, saving graces of God with no need for mediation."

The role is further blurred by the continuing influence of anti-clericalism which some traditions like the Disciples of Christ have struggled with in the past. A third influence in this confusion is incumbent in the advent of the medical and psychological involvement with the health of body and psyche. This has left many faithful

ministers asking "what remains unique in my function as a minister?" Finally, the inheritance of enlightenment and rationalism and more recent criticism from secular sources have led to a loss of esteem for the church in general and the ministry specifically. All of these have created a confusion regarding the nature of ministry and its function in the care of souls.

My thesis is that all of these as well as other trends have led to an identity gap for contemporary ministers, particularly as regards their function in the care of souls. And, that this gap has resulted in a narrowing of the historical model of ministry; losing much of the symbolic function of ministry. The problem is, I will suggest, heightened by the frequent substitution of pastoral counselings' model of guidance and of other more functional and professional modes of ministry. Not only is such a substitution too narrow, but it is frequently at odds with the Christian understanding of the quest of the soul. So, I will argue that it is central to the integrity of the ministry that it recover a model of "caring for the soul" that is more whole, historical, and more Christian.

This lack of clarity and substitution on the part of clergy has not only affected the morale and esteem of the minister, but of the church itself. There are few things which are any more crucial to the vitality and growth of the church than a minister which operates from a self-understanding that is relevant to its community and faithful to its tradition. Historically, regardless of the tradition, the importance of a vital ministry to a vital church has been recognized. That insight was not foreign to the reformers. In fact, it was central to their reasons for reforming the tradition. As Richard Baxter

pointed out in his influential book:

If God would reform the ministry and set them on their duties zealously and faithfully, the people would certainly be reformed. All churches either rise or fall as far as the ministry does rise or fall, not in riches or worldly grandeur, but knowledge, zeal and ability of their work.¹

Though the reformation led to great changes in the understanding of ministry's role in the care of souls, we will argue that its proper place has not yet been restored. Such a failure has meant that clergy have frequently failed to fulfill a function central to the health of the church and its people.

Reason for Study

I have suggested that much of the problem in the contemporary failure regarding the cure of souls rests in a substitution of methods of pastoral counseling for a more whole model of ministry. It is important for this substitution to be addressed and its inadequacy spelled out. The problem lies not in the introduction of psychological insights to the ministry to the soul. To the contrary, there are few developments in recent history which have offered more to the minister's understanding of ministry to souls than those of depth psychology and counseling. The difficulty rests, rather, in the confusion of "therapy to specific ills with the salvation of the human spirit."² The crux of the problem which we address involves the substitution of anthropology inherent in certain psychological theories and their modes of counseling for the Christian vision of humanity. We have

¹ Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor (London: S.C.M. 1956) p. 9.

² Daniel Day Williams, The Minister and the Care of Souls (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) p. 25.

frequently allowed a psychological vision of anthropology to be substituted for a Christian vision, and that has resulted in a ministry in service of that psychological vision, rather than the gospel.

The problem is addressed in a personal way by Madeleine L'Engle in this journal entry:

A young priest friend said to me one day at lunch that he is disturbed by his brethren giving so much importance to the "mental health" of themselves and their flocks. "It is a very bad thing", he said, "when we confuse mental health and sanctity."

That night during a wakeful period, I thought about all the people in history, literature, art whom I most admire: Mozart, Shakespeare, Homer, El Greco, St. John, Chekhov, Gregory of Nyssa, Dostoevsky, Emily Bronte: not one of them would qualify for a mental health certificate. "Do you know anybody you really admire, who has really been important to the world in a creative way who would qualify for a mental health certificate?"³

The confusion which seems to bother both Madeleine L'Engle is that by which I am bothered as well; the confusion between mental health and salvation of the soul. The focus of this study will be to consider the basic question of "pastoral theology" as it addresses ministry in this situation. The problem is to discern more clearly the nature of the Christian claim of salvation and the role of ministry in that salvation.

Previous Work

Previously, Daniel Day Williams has raised the importance of addressing this distinction. He suggested that while it is sometimes difficult to draw the tenuous line between mental health and salvation

³ Madeleine L'Engle, A Circle of Quiet (New York: Seabury, 1972) p. 54.

of the soul, it is central to the task of ministry. He begins by calling us to remember that the self-understanding of ministry and of all Christian life is inextricably bound with the life and ministry of Christ. Any understanding of our goal as humans or purpose as ministers must make its discovery from that story. A major consequence of that discovery is its call to a consideration of the attitude which "the Christian faith takes towards the continuing ills of life, toward the meaning of suffering, and toward the natural goal of life of the complete health of the well-adjusted person."⁴

The question for Williams focuses on the place of suffering in the growth of the soul. Williams examines three alternatives to this question. The first alternative is that of the stoic:

The self is guarded against threatened destruction through an inner strength which makes itself invulnerable to the assaults of outrageous fortune. The protection is partly a strength to withstand and it is partly a protective shield, for the stoic will not let himself be moved by suffering more than he can help.⁵

The second way of dealing with suffering is that of the epicurean:

Let us create for ourselves, it says, an island of harmony and satisfaction in the midst of the chaos of life. In order to distill the creative essence of life, we must shun its gross evils, wall ourselves off from as much of its suffering as we can and shape life⁶ to yield gratification of all our instincts and capabilities.

The third alternative is, for Williams, the Christian alternative. This is at odds with both of the previous two. Though there is always a necessary stoicism in the practical wisdom of life, the Christian view of life is never for Williams purely stoic, because

4 Williams, p. 26. 5 Ibid., p. 23 6 Ibid., p. 24.

"the Christian is not ultimately concerned about protecting himself from sufferingIn the involvements of love we seek to share life, not immunity to its pain."⁷ Nor does the Christian view of life affirm the Epicurean search for a self-satisfying life within an island of harmony as its highest goal. Both the Stoic and the Epicurean ways of dealing with suffering are, he suggests, implicit in various psychological doctrines.

Williams' criticism, here, is central to our thesis that too frequently the psychological anthropologies which have been uncritically adopted as models of ministry have emphasized one of these two alternatives and thus run contrary to the Christian view of life. This conflict is summarized by Williams:

The Christian ideal of life envisions something higher than freedom from anguish or invulnerability to its ravages. Its goal cannot be perfectly adjusted self. In the world as it is, a caring love cannot but regard such a goal as intolerably self-centered. What does it mean to be completely adjusted and at peace in a world as riddled with injustice, with the cries of the hungry, with the great unsolved questions of human living as this. We see why in the end we cannot identify therapy for specific skills with salvation for the human spirit. To live in love means to accept the risks of life and its threats to peace of mind. Certainly the Christian and the Christian ministry to persons is concerned to relieve physical ills, anxieties and inner conflicts. But, this relief of private burdens is to set the person free to assume more important and universal ones.⁸

What has been lost for Williams is the central concern of the Christian faith of the salvation of the human spirit, as involving not only relieving of pain, but also accepting the inevitability of suffering for those who love. The criticism is a moral one. It raises a moral question about the bifurcation which ministry has allowed

7 Ibid., p. 25 8 Ibid.

between personal fulfillment and change and social fulfillment and change. Such a separation is, for Williams, and for the author in fundamental opposition to the Christian understanding of the moral life.

What Williams addresses is the "moral context" of pastoral care. Appearing shortly before Williams' book was Hiltner's,⁹ which gave some needed broadening to the place of the minister in the historical role of the care of souls. His study launched much of the renewed interest in the critical evaluation of the "theology of ministry".

More recently the question of the "reduction of the clergy role" and its' ensuing implications has been raised by Don Browning.¹⁰ Browning, in his essay, addresses the confusion he feels exists in the minds of many mainline Protestant clergy between the personal and social-ethical goals that govern pastoral care. He hazards the guess that "most pastoral care in mainline churches is practiced without a great deal of sensitivity to the relation between personal problems and the larger social-ethical questions."¹¹ His thesis is that there is a "moral context to all acts of care." We will look more carefully at his suggestions later.

Paul Vitz has added to this criticism.¹² Though he states the

9 Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology (Nashville: Abington, 1958).

10 Don Browning, Moral Context of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

11 Ibid., p. 11.

12 Paul Vitz, Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self Worship (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

case too strongly perhaps, the thesis of his writing is important. He again focuses on the disparity between the anthropologies of the Christian and the self-theorists of current psychological circles. His contribution is a more direct exploration of the possible "self-aggrandizing" effect that continual focus on the self to the exclusion of the Other (both God and human) can have on individuals. His criticisms are also important for two other reasons. First, he is himself a psychologist and thus provides a perspective and criticism from within the field on the danger of confusing science with philosophy or religion. Secondly, his criticisms are aimed at the work of self-theorists like Carl Rogers. Since the Rogerian non-directive therapy has influenced the pastoral counseling movement (at least until recently) more than any other, his critique of its misuses is particularly important.

Limits of the Study

While the criticisms of Williams, Browning and Vitz are important for this study, since they raise the question of this "moral context of pastoral care", this study will not focus directly upon that question. Rather, I will seek here to look at the broader question of the "theology of ministry". Rather than focusing on the inadequacies of the counseling model, I will address it only in that it has performed a narrowing function on our vision of ministry. I will explore instead a more whole model of ministry; a model which I will suggest is more historical, more adequate and more Christian.

Though I agree with Williams, Browning and Vitz that the separation of the personal and social fulfillment have created a model

of ministry which can encourage "self-centeredness", I will argue that the inadequacy is at heart a spiritual inadequacy. It is not so much in the criticism of the psychological insights that this study will focus then, but in the criticism of the model of ministry as lacking a transcendent dimensions. Henri Nouwen and Robert Lifton raise the question as it applies to contemporary society.

Nouwen suggests that the predicament of persons in the contemporary society is that of living in a dislocated world. "Nuclear man is a man who has lost naive faith in possibilities of technology and is painfully aware that the same powers that enable man to create new lifestyles carry the potential for self-destruction."¹³ While Nouwen assumes with Rogers and the self-theorists that there is basic in human striving a groping for direction, to ask for meaning and purpose, he believes that persons confront a different reality in their search.

In all this searching, he (nuclear man) suffers from the inevitable knowledge that his time is a time in which it has become possible for man to destroy not only life but also the possibility of re-birth, not only man, but also mankind, not only for periods of time, but for history itself. For nuclear man, the future has become an option.¹⁴

Nouwen posits that nuclear man/woman has come up against the limits of the tenuous nature of life in ways that pre-nuclear humanity has not. This confrontation of the limits of humanity has recalled many persons in the 70s and 80s to a deeper, spiritual quest as they have struggled with the limits of the world and their lives. It is the

¹³ Henri J.M. Nouwen, The Wounded Healer (New York: Doubleday, 1972) p. 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

assumption of this study and the focus of this study that this quest is not primarily a psychological one, nor one for the therapist, but is a spiritual and theological one for the priest as the spiritual guide. This is the nature of the ministerial mode which we will be exploring. And the problem as we will see is that unfortunately ministers have surrendered their function in the care of souls and adopted either a pastoral counseling mode or a model characterized by social activism.

Nouwen bases many of these assumptions upon the work of Robert Lifton.¹⁵ Lifton sees nuclear man/woman as characterized by three factors: 1) historical dislocation, 2) fragmented ideology, and 3) a search for immortality. In contrast to a view of humanity as active and self-motivated, he observes society as without direction or purpose. He sees nuclear man/woman characterized as follows: "He finds a lack of a sense of continuity so vital for creative life. He finds himself as part of a non-history in which only the sharp moment of the here and now is valuable. In his dislocated state he becomes paralyzed."¹⁶ The characteristic reactions to this dislocation are "apathy and boredom". He says:

Only when man feels himself responsible for the future can he have hope or despair, but when he thinks of himself as the passive victim of an extremely complex technological society, his motivation falters and he starts drifting from one moment to the next, making life a long row of randomly chained incidents and accidents.¹⁷

This historical dislocation has created a fundamental barrier to

¹⁵ Robert J. Lifton, Boundaries (New York: Random House, 1970) p. 98ff.

¹⁶ Nouwen, p. 8.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

notions of self-actualization in contemporary society. It raises a question for the ministry in the cure of souls. "How do we enable persons to make sense of the brokenness that is inherent in their existence?"

Nouwen further asserts that nuclear humanity is exposed to such divergent ideas that no one idea or thought system can bring them together into a consistent outlook on life or ideology from which to operate. This leads to a general all pervading feeling of confusion, loss of unity and loss of direction. Unable to find a course of action, paralysis develops. This paralysis results when nuclear humanity has "lost the source of his creativity which is his sense of immortality. When man is no longer able to look beyond himself, he loses his desire to create and the excitement of being human."¹⁸

This search for immortality is the core problem of humanity for Nouwen. "This represents," he says, "a compelling, universal urge to maintain an inner sense of continuity over time and space, with various elements of life."¹⁹ This search is for him central to the quest of the human soul. Many of the self-theorists today offer an optimism regarding human ability to deal with problems which plague it and call forth the individual to recognize that ability. But, Nouwen would argue that such a task is hopeless for the individual who is frozen by fears of meaninglessness and helplessness. The prior task is to enter into the wilderness of the struggling soul where one seeks to discover guiding symbols and meaning and to recreate or discover a new source of immortality.

18 Ibid., p. 9. 19 Ibid.

That is the task which underlies all ministry. It is the role which is central to the historical image of priest in community. I believe that questions regarding one's sense of immortality and questions of the dislocation which he or she suffers are the illnesses which often lead persons to pastors and counselors in our contemporary society. They come seeking help from one who will enter with them into the wilderness, in search of meaning and experience of the one who would give their lives location.

Unfortunately, as Kenneth Leech argues, many clergy have not been willing or able to journey with their people in this manner. The tragedy for the church, for individuals and for clergy is that many clergy surrendered their role as spiritual guides just when there was a tremendous rise of interest in spirituality and need for spiritual guidance. He believes that many of the counter culture movements of the 60s and 70s sought spirituality outside the walls of mainline churches. These movements have included those of the drug culture, various Eastern religious movements, transcendental meditation, the Jesus movement and the movement of liberation theology. He concludes that there has never been a time when spiritual direction is more urgently needed than in the present climate of soul searching.²⁰

He calls clergy to re-own the tradition of the spiritual guide as one who listens, and is exposed and naked before the storm and the fire.²¹ There are for him important distinctions to be made between the pastoral counseling movement and the tradition of spiritual direction.

20 Kenneth Leech, Soul Friend (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) p. 33.

21 Ibid., p. 32

He outlines those as follows.

First, the pastoral counselor has tended to be concerned with states of emotional distress, with an emphasis on problems and problem solving. Pastoral care in the Christian understanding is not restricted to the troubled or distressed or to crisis points alone:

Pastoral care is more than therapeutic. The pastor is concerned certainly with the more obvious needs of people for various kinds of help, but it is also concerned with the wellbeing. The pastoral relationship derives its significance for the special ministries to those in distress from the fact that it is a continuing ministry to life's normality. Unlike the physician, psychiatrist and social worker who have no relationship at all except there be some kind of distress for which their services are needed, the pastor's relationship is just as important when there are no problems crying out for immediate attention.... The priest is primarily concerned with spirituality as the fundamental requirement of health.²²

Secondly, the counseling movement has been primarily clinic based or office based rather than church based or community based. The argument here is that one cannot separate Christian based caring from the life of the community of the church or the broader world.

Third, the movement has tended to focus excessively on the problems of the individual (a fault which he notes the church has also shared at times). Again, the problem has been that whether with one person in counseling, or with the church as a whole, we have often reinforced social injustice rather than changed it. "Counseling then becomes a substitute for social change, a way of encouraging adjustment and so reducing discontent."²³

When the differences between the two roles are properly understood, then a growing relationship between them can be sought. That

22 Ibid., p. 100. 23 Ibid., p. 104.

common world meets in the overlap between the inner and outer worlds.

The aim of spiritual direction is the achievement of wholeness of life, an integrated personality in which the inner and outer man are united. Yet, to become whole and integrated is painful.... it is a process which involves conflict and crisis and all spiritual direction is involved in the crises of the soul. The death and resurrection experience is repeated in the life of the soul and the context of this experience is the area where psychology and theology overlap. For both the theologian and therapist are involved with the wholeness of man, with his inner world and with the cure of souls.²⁴

It is in this overlap between the inner and outer worlds, between darkness and light that this study will focus. It will seek to discern and discover the symbolic function of the minister in that arena.

As Leech comments, "Spiritual direction is concerned at its central point with guiding individuals to discover symbolic life."²⁵ Here Leech finds common ground with Carl Jung who says "We (those of us in the West) have no symbolic life, and we are all badly in need of the symbolic life. Only the symbolic life can express the need of the soul---the daily need of the soul."²⁶

It is in ministry to that symbolic life of the soul that the priest has served throughout history as he or she seeks to mediate the movement between the inner and outer world. That area of ministry is the area in which this study shall take its explorations. It will explore a "theology of ministry" which takes seriously its role as guides, sponsors, symbols and servants of the liminal. Expanding on the thought of Urban T. Holmes,²⁷ it will explore the nature of the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁵ Carl Jung, "The Symbolic Life", Pastoral Psychology No. 80 (1954) p. 13.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

²⁷ Holmes has taken the lead in addressing the "symbolic" nature of priest throughout the history of the religious practitioner. The historical survey can be found in The Future of Ministry.

priest as a symbol and servant in this overlap between the inner and outer, the wilderness and the city, the symbolic and the concrete. This symbolic mode expects a ministry which has been ignored over much of the recent history of the cure of souls.

Method

The method of exploration will be historical and anthropological. It will explore the receptive, passive, spiritual mode as it has taken shape throughout the history of religious experience. I will suggest that this offers the original mode in which the ministry has been rooted. Out of that historical and anthropological exploration I will seek to discern a shape of ministry that is more constant with this role as wilderness guide. Through consideration of the "ritual process", I will try to develop a picture of ministry which seeks not to stabilize disorder and unrest, but to be a sponsor and guide enabling the "potency of disorder" to empower transformation and conversion. It is my belief that such a model can aide our understanding of nurture and growth providing more dynamic definition. It will allow for an in-breaking of the spirit and its grace in ways needed by those of us in mainline denominations.

The study will focus more on that which the minister embodies than that which he or she does. I will explore the ways in which the functional definition has been a particular mistake of the contemporary era. The corrective suggested will plum the symbol of the minister as the one who is seeking integration and wholeness and recognizes the spiritual-liminal journey as his or her own path. And affirms being particularly empowered to serve as sponsors for the journeys of others.

As a minister in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), I am particularly aware of the difficulties involved in any consideration of the minister as "specially empowered". And yet, I believe that the rejection of this understanding whole piece has been a flaw within the Disciple's tradition and its understanding of ministry. Though there have been notable divergent opinions in recent years, the vestiges of the Disciple anti-clericalism have meant that it has been particularly open to the narrowing of ministry which I have been suggesting above. Because it is so clearly representative of the active, functional mode of ministry which is today dominant and because it is the tradition out of which my roots have come, I will address the nature of the Disciples' movement toward the contemporary dilemma more directly. I believe, however, that this exploration will prove largely relevant to ministry in mainline traditions in general.

Definition of Terms

Perhaps a word should be said about some of the terms which will be central in this study. First, the term "cura" in the understanding of "cure of souls" as we will be using it, will have reference to what has been traditionally defined more in the sense of "care" than cure. It is, says McNeill, "readily applied either to the tasks involved in the care of a person or thing or to the mental experience of carefulness or solicitude concerning its object."²⁸ Though the stress has at

²⁸ John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper & Row, 1951) p. vii.

different times in history been laid more on "cure", I prefer a usage which suggests the attitude and tasks of caring for souls in the crises and joys of life. As we have been reminded by Daniel Day Williams, "we can care, even when we cannot cure".²⁹

Though our references to soul in this study do not require a specific depth discussion of its meaning, one clarification will be helpful. When I am using soul, I do not mean to suggest a dichotomy of the soul as a "thing apart, set against a supposed inert and peripheral body."³⁰ I will be using it to suggest the center of experience in continuity throughout time as suggested by Whitehead.³¹ My interest in the soul will see it as that which is central in the control and aliveness of the entire person.³²

In the use of the term minister, priest, pastor, I will be referring more generally, to the one "set aside" ordained for a unique ministry. In using the term "priest", I do not mean to suggest the more narrow emphasis of a "priestly role". Rather, I will be referring to the historical line of those set aside by their community as religious leaders and specifically as religious symbols of the journey between the wilderness and the structured. The titles used for this person, whether shaman, priest, or pastor will be used to explore that symbol. Though many of the functions of that symbolic person would later be changed, the basic purpose will remain constant in many

29 Williams, p. 9.

30 Hiltner, p. 98.

31 John B. Cobb, Jr., A Christian Natural Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) p. 47 ff.

32 Ibid., p. 50.

ways. Finally, in order to explore the uniqueness of the symbol of the "ordained clergy", I will be using minister exclusively for the ordained and do not mean by so doing to deny the valid ministry of the entire body of Christ.

Organization

The second chapter of this project will focus more directly on the minister throughout history. It will look at the roots and seek to trace the symbolic or sacramental person through our history, looking at the way we have distorted that image.

The third chapter will explore the way that distortion has been present in the history and tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and its ministry. The study of the ministry of the Disciples will provide the opportunity for us to assess in greater depth the development of the "minister of the Word" in the past four centuries. I will explore the heritage which has been left by that tradition and the problems inherent in it.

The fourth chapter will provide the opportunity to reflect on the question of "what has happened to the image of the minister in the contemporary period". I will explore the loss of esteem and lagging self-image among ministry and attempt to offer some assessment of the reasons for that loss.

The fifth chapter will begin to sketch a picture of ministry which is I believe more whole and more historical. It will trace the image of the priest through human consciousness, discovering the place of ministry in that history.

In the final chapter, I will look at the geography of the ministers' symbolic role which was presented in Chapter Five. But, in that chapter, I will focus on the dynamics of the wilderness journey by looking at the suggestions, the ritual process, and the recent work of developmental psychology as descriptive of the symbolic mode of ministry. It will offer in conclusion some directions for further study. Those references will be listed along with others in the Bibliography.

CHAPTER 2

TRACING THE ROOTS

SEARCHING FOR THE SYMBOLIC

Man is a seeker after health, but not health of the body alone, health of the body may be contributory to, but it does not guarantee health of personality. It may be possessed by a man who suffers painful disorders of mind and spirit. On the other hand it may be destroyed by mental or emotional disease. The health of what is ultimately sought is not something to be secured by material means alone; it is the well-being of the soul. In our day the science that heals the body has advanced far beyond that which aims to restore the soul. Yet the function of the healer of the soul is not less ancient than that of the physician of the body.¹

In the middle ages....the pastoral role of Gregory the Great formulated and disseminated the medieval theory of the minister as the pastoral ruler or ruling elder...In the reformation, the minister was primarily the preacher of the word... and later the evangelist. All knew their task with relative precision. Now confusion exists as was pointed out by Mar May in a study on the ministry. "Entering the ministry is more like entering the army where no one knows where he will land or live or what specific work he will be called upon to perform."²

These two remarks raise for us the dilemma of present day clergy as they consider their role in the cure of souls today. If as Niebuhr and Williams suggest, we have lost much of our identity and clarity regarding our function as clergy. I would suggest that it may have something to do with our loss of the long historical tradition of the religious practitioner or priest in the cure of souls. As we struggle to discern our unique role among the "professionals" dealing with the health of the body and soul, we may suffer from this loss of our

¹ John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper & Row, 1951) p. vii.

² Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry (New York: Harper & Row, 1956) p. 5.

historical role and task.

Urban Holmes shares a well worn story which may in some ways suggest some of the importance of this history. The story is of the old "pillar" of the parish who upon being introduced to the new curate aged twenty-two remarked "Young man, how can I possibly learn anything from you?" Though the remark at first struck him as impertinent, Holmes said, "I have become more recently to believe there is a gleam of truth in it." "Madam", he is reported to have said, "when I speak to you, I am two thousand years old."³

I too would suggest that there is more than just a little truth in the young man's remark. For any of us who have trembled at the thought of giving counsel to those twice our age only to find that we somehow give them great aide, or who have felt inadequate to deliver the word of God to the assembled only to find that somehow he/she had spoken words that made that revelation present, know the truth of the young man's statement. Somehow when the minister speaks or acts in faith, he or she is somehow connected to that long tradition.

This tradition is one which Holmes regards as more like thirty thousand than two thousand years old. As clergy of the reformation tradition, we have for the last four centuries struggled with ways of understanding our connection to this tradition while avoiding claims of adhering to ideas of "apostolic succession". We have also sought to understand the role of clergy within the ministry of a whole church which embodies the priesthood of all believers. In attempting to cut

³ Urban T. Holmes, III, The Priest in Community (New York: Seabury, 1978) p. 70.

ourselves off from the abuses of the apostolic tradition, we have frequently bifurcated ourselves from any clergy tradition.

I will argue that this separation has contributed to the current confusion. If we are to gain clarity regarding our identity as ministers (and especially ministers in the cure of souls), we must rediscover our place within that tradition. Therefore, we will sketch in a broad stroke manner the journey of the religious practitioner through the history of humankind. It is clear that such a journey could well fill several volumes and take several routes, but, we hope here to discover some images of that history and trace the shape of those symbols of "priesthood" through history. That path will be one largely guided by the studies of Urban T. Holmes and indebted to the theological shape of the journey which he assumes.⁴

Holmes has suggested that "the symbolic nature of the priest is a specific image within the configuration of consciousness or the landscape of reality. As a specific symbol, it is a picture in itself with certain characteristics and affect."⁵ He remarks that traditionally in the history and sociology of religion as they assess religious behavior they discover three components: community, cult and creed. Community points to "a life together based on a common experience of the transcendent, a cult is a ritual or liturgy, and creed is what a community states it believes, whether in mythical or theological terms."⁶

⁴ Holmes has been instrumental in tracing the history of the ministry as we will trace it in this chapter. His major studies have been in the Priest in Community cited above, and Urban T. Holmes, III, The Future Shape of Ministry (New York: Seabury, 1971).

⁵ Holmes, Priest in Community, p. 35.

⁶ Ibid.

He postulates that the fourth component may be understood as the priest: as the liminal servant....one who is a symbol of the divine connection with human.

That component in more specific and developed form will be assessed in another chapter. Here we want to address the way it has developed historically and to discover our place within that history. We hope to discover from that journey a more whole image of ministry.

The beginnings of this symbol can be traced to the priest or religious practitioner seen in the ancient shaman. In the shaman of the hunting and gathering societies we discover something about the nature of priesthood which will affect its understanding throughout history. Let us turn to that study.

THIRTY THOUSAND YEARS OF JOURNEYING: THE ANCIENT SHAMAN

Among the cave paintings by Cro-Magnon humans found in southern France, there are two figures that appear more primitive than the others. These may well be, anthropologists believe, depictions of shaman-like religious practitioners. Holmes posits that while there may have initially existed a leaderless religious community (he doubts it) soon these charismatic religious leaders emerged among these tribes. These leaders, shamans, whether in ancient or more recent hunting and gathering societies are most commonly characterized by the ability to heal. He (shamans were male) is the "theotokos" one who bears God to humankind. He is the specialist in the human soul. One of his particularly distinguishing characteristics is that of magical flight, out of the body experiences which take place during a trance or altered state of consciousness. The purpose of this flight is to converse with

the spirits in order that the shaman may expand the consciousness of those he serves.

A good shaman has great power at image making. He is an utterly convincing performer, a superb storyteller who makes present for people their vision or myth of the world. The shamans dress, his masks, his instruments are all to be used with trickery or irony to turn the world of his clients upside down; to crack their common-sense presuppositions imposed by structures. IT IS IN THIS SENSE THAT THE SHAMAN IS A PERSONIFIED PARABLE, LEADING HIS PEOPLE INTO THE ANTI-STRUCTURE, TO THE VERY EDGE OF THE ABYSS.

These characteristics of the shaman, as the living parable, and the one who bears God in such a way that his/her symbolizing of God turns the structures of security upside down for their people, are characteristic images that lead to the edge of the abyss or anti-structure. They are central to the shaman and provide an image of a transcendent-liminal servant which I will with Holmes trace through the history of the Judea-Christian faith. These are characteristics, which we will suggest continually challenge and provide images of restoration for the priesthood.

Frequently distinctions are made between shaman and priest. In these distinctions the shaman is usually defined as from tribal cultures. He is "one who gets his power directly from divine sources, is independent and part time. He focuses on the individual and uses spirit possession and frenzy."⁷ "His ability to hold the crowd together and position of leadership is by virtue of one thing: his

7 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

ability to convince them that he is in possession of mysterious powers which are denied ordinary men."⁸

The priest on the other hand is defined as more closely connected with the sacerdotal system. The essential characteristic of the priest is that he is representative of the system. In shamanism the mysterious power inheres in the person of the leader. In sacerdotalism the priest, the ceremony, and the physical accoutrements are the sacramental expressions of the power which inheres in the institution. The unity of the sacerdotal group is brought about not by crowd suggestion but by systemized suggestion through sacrifice, ritual and through a code of commands; through dogma.

The power of the priest is in the conserving of the institution. "He receives his credentials as a result of special training, he is the member of an organization and works full time."⁹ The role is defined not by abandonment to intuition and impulse, but by logic of consistency with an ever present assumption of the validity of the past.¹⁰

A third type of religious leader that is frequently posited is that of the prophet. Coe, for example, suggests that the prophet is one who asks not "what does the system say: but what is the Divine Will".¹¹ He goes directly to the sources of religious life. He suggests that the prophet, like the shaman, goes directly to the sources, seeking the divine. But says Coe, their motivation is quite different. "The shaman goes to the divine source in order to get

⁸ Ray D. Lindley, "Types of Religious Leaders and the Church's Ministry," *Renewal of Church*, III (1963) p. 128.

⁹ Holmes, *Priest in Community*, p. 36.

¹⁰ Lindley, p. 132. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134

control of the divine power, the prophet goes to the source to become an instrument of the divine purpose. His leadership, while it is continuous with shamanism, thus transcends it and contrasts with it."¹²

This argument is indicative of a frequent understanding of types of religious leaders that see the prophetic, priestly and shamanistic functions as separate forms which are usually seen as transcending the others, though the order of transcendence may vary.

But Holmes questions this distinction and the order of "transcendence" as suggested by Coe. Frequently, he suggests, anthropologists find that religious practitioners possess attributes of two or more of these. For instance, the Mara'akame of the Huichol Indians of Mexico and the religious practitioners of the Campa Indians of Peru seem to possess the attributes of both shaman and priest. Here and elsewhere there is a certain overlapping of function which contributes to the question of whether or not the shaman and priest evolved separately. This has lead some anthropologists to suggest that the shaman as a religious practitioner is the original and general of which the priest, the diviner, the prophet and the medicine man or healer are derivative specialists.¹³

Holmes believes that these studies suggest that as the culture moved into a more settled existence there was a shift to a more differentiated state of that which was originally assumed within one person. Yet, he argues that "behind such differentiation, the shaman remains deeply buried within the consciousness of man, shaped by three

12 Ibid. 13 Holmes, Priest in Community, p. 81.

million years of hunting and gathering societies, this image of one who mediates between the people and the spirits."¹⁴

As that differentiation has taken place the shaman has often been characterized in a negative and inaccurate way as one who seeks to gain control of the divine power for his own use. And yet this is not consistent with the understanding of the shaman. The shaman is for Jung, the manaperson. As such, he manages the mana, the energy of the divine. But, the shaman as mana person knows that the mana is not something he can capture for himself. Rather, the good shaman is like the effective electrical engineer. He knows to respect the power of what he studies and to use it for good. But he cannot claim it as his own.

This image of the mana person as the conveyor of the image of God to the people, bearing a presence he knows he cannot control is one which is more faithful to the understanding of the transcendent, liminal servant which we will be tracing throughout history. This servant conveys a force and function that is more consistent with the image of the minister who calls forth growth and change rather than acts in stabilizing the status quo. This is the model which (as suggested in the first chapter) calls persons into the edge of the wilderness and provides a helpful challenge to a ministry of the status quo. There is little doubt as we trace the development of the "symbol" of the shaman that its changing nature provided important and often necessary responses to the cultural changes and evolving nature of the church; however, I will also suggest that the increasing fragmentation of

14 Ibid., p. 82.

roles and the frequent loss of the transcendent element of the shaman
has been a critical loss for the minister of the soul. It is the
 assessment of the losses and gains, of the transforming nature of
 ministry through the Judean-Christian tradition that we will now turn.

DEVELOPMENT OF PRIESTHOOD IN JUDAISM

By the time the history of the ministry of the ancient Hebrew people is recorded there appears to have developed a differentiation of roles. McNeill states that from early times in Judaism there existed three distinct classes within religious leadership.

1. Priests - A hereditary class whose work and teaching were connected with public worship and ceremonies.
2. Prophets - Who gave utterance in the name of the Lord on religious and moral issues and sometimes rebuked and directed prominent individuals.
3. Wisemen (Hakhamin) - Who counseled their fellows of all ranks and callings on the principles of the good life and details of personal thought and conduct.¹⁵

There has arisen by this time in Israel then, a separation of functions in such a way that parts of the shamanistic roots are already lost. The priest has now taken on more the role of dispenser of the ceremonial rites and worship. The role of "image maker" and liminal servant has even by this early time taken on a more settled, and fixed nature. The function of the movement between forms of conscience, from wilderness to city have taken on a more formalized nature and became less radical. The distinctions can be seen in Jeremiah where their functions are that: "the law shall not perish from the priest,

¹⁵ McNeill, p. 2.

nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet" (Jer. 18:18). One can see here the insistence that the images of God's word, have for the priest, become more legalistic. The functions of the other two persons are still more charismatic and personal.

The Hebrew prophets assumed a portion of the shamanistic task, as they sought time and again to discern God's will. They went again and again to God and frequently acted as parables, overturning the comfortable structures as they called both personal and corporate existences into question. These prophets came frequently as charismatic figures, bearing God, speaking to Israel a divine word. And yet their separation from the priestly function suggests the changed nature of religious leadership.

This shift resulted in large part from a change in the understanding of moral responsibility. For our Hebrew ancestors, the individual was morally responsible. The Jew felt "God was the guide of his soul".¹⁶ It was to Yahweh that he said: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel. "God is the guide even of wisdom and the director of the wise".¹⁷ Thus, the need for spiritual or moral counsel or for the theotokos, one who bears God, lessens considerably. There was some need for counsel about the difficulties and complexities of religious life and the "wisemen" had the most central role in this guidance. But this guidance is seldom dealing with the liminal. Usually it is more occupied with counsel about the law and its wisdom. This wiseman is characteristic of the ancient Semetic cultures. Egypt and Babylon had similar guides. They were more "educators of the conscience". Their

16 Ibid., p. 1. 17 Ibid.

writings, some of the earliest extant writings of humankind, seek to give counsel to those struggling with issues of the moral conscience. An example of their writings can be seen in the Wisdom of Ptah-hotep, written around 2000 B.C. It consists of "moral maxims set in a reported discourse before the King of Egypt. Its purpose is that sins may be banished among persons of understanding."¹⁸

But the primary function of the writings were not so much to make laws as to pass on the guidance of the fathers. As its author says, "the desire is to hand on the weighty sayings of the ancestors and of those who have obeyed the Gods."¹⁹ The wiseman was not interested as the prophet with challenging contemporaries on public issues, (nor was the prophet often concerned with the struggle of individual souls); rather, he was convinced that his message was in accord with "divine wisdom" and without claiming the charisma of inspired utterance, he demanded attention, assent and imitation of his own example. "I give you good doctrine" says the speaker in Proverbs 4:2, "do not forsake my teachings."

The objective of all these wisemen was that of bringing the common life of persons under the control of religious principles. Such an objective is noteworthy and no doubt contributed greatly to the moral fabric embodied in the Judea-Christian tradition; however, it often lost the spiritual connection present with the shaman and frequently became both legalistic and oppressive. It was in the legalism and requirements of casuistry connected with the later "scribes and pharisees" that Jesus heaped criticism, calling these guides "blind

18 Ibid., p. 3. 19 Ibid.

guides"²⁰ Jesus charged them with self glorification, pretence and oppressive legalism.

This development begins with the exile. During the exile the synagogue became the focal point of Jewish piety rather than the temple which had for generations been the central place. Worship shifted from a sacrificial pattern to one in which reading of the scripture and its exposition was the central feature. But, this shift to a loyalty to the scriptures bound the community to its past. Its God was the God of the Fathers who had been with them in the past and would someday grant his promises to the Fathers granting them a glorious future. This loyalty to the past gave Israel a strong sense of history and election. ...and distinguished it from all other nations. But this loyalty to the past had another side. It frequently meant that Israel bound herself with her past, placing God in the past as well. This loss of God in the present caused a radical shift in the understanding of God and human relationships. God now became Judge of the world.

The scriptures now began to be seen in a different light. It was no longer primarily a historical record of God's dealings with his people, but a book of divine law.

The most important national leaders now were the scribes who kept hold of the divine scripture and were its guardians and interpreters. They sought to give practical regulations in the contemporary situation from the original texts. This unquestioning obedience led to an orthodoxy and legalism of which we are speaking. There did spring up different schools of thought regarding the interpretations of the scriptures, including the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

20 Ibid.

Under this theology, the question of repentance and salvation was one of merit and good works, obeying the sacred writ. It is into this setting that Jesus emerges. He preaches in the thought form and idiom of the Jewish tradition, "launching a tremendous protest against contemporary Jewish legalism, thus renewing under changed conditions the protest of the ancient prophets against the official Hebrew religion."²¹

Like the ancient prophets he contrasts God's demands of righteousness with the formalism of the cults. So he preaches "radical obedience in place of ritualism and a legalistic conception of man's relation to God." And yet, unlike the ancient prophets he is not so much concerned with social righteousness. That message of the prophets was in fact the codified means by which individuals' personal relation to God was now being regulated. It was this legalism against which Jesus protested. He was rather interested in the radical obedience of the whole person to God.

Clearly the repentance of Jesus is not just a human achievement, thus creating a claim to the grace of God. It is rather self-recollection and self-knowledge leading to a sincere confession of sin and a readiness to stand before God as a sinner and throw oneself wholly upon his grace.....Jesus agrees with Judaism that God no longer reveals himself in the history of the nation. When he speaks of judgement he is not thinking of disasters in history. The judgement he speaks of is the judgement of the individual. Everyone must stand before God's tribunal and give an account of oneself.²²

And yet, this transcendent judgement aspect of Jesus does not mean he is remote from human history. Unlike Judaism where God reigns by means of angels and through the mediation of the book of law, where

²¹ Roldolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity (New York: World, 1956) p. 71.

²² Ibid.

the Jewish community is marked off from the outside world by an elaborate ritual, where there is an "artificial other worldliness" for Jesus:

God's distinction from and transcendence over the world means that he is always the God who comes. He meets man not only in the future judgement, but already here and now in daily life, with its challenges and opportunities. In the same way man is distinct from the world in the sense that he has no security in it. He cannot trust in any tangible reality. His real life consists in his encounter with his neighbor and his response to the claims of God.²³

This shift in humanity's understanding of God and human purpose addresses the heart of Christ's understanding of ministry as both incarnate and transcendent; encountering neighbor and responding to the call of God immanently in the present and expectantly in the future. All of these somehow come together for Christ, as he ministers to the world and calls to that ministry. As we will see for Christ, many of the elements of shamanism have been restored with greater depth and directness.

ANCIENT PERIOD: THE SACRAMENTAL PERSON

As the Apostolic church began to consider its ministry it focused on the person, rather than the office. The understanding of the purpose of the person's ministry then as now was shaped by his or her understanding of Christ's ministry. It was the embodiment of Christ that provided the measure of faithfulness. Though we will explore his ministry more later, we will briefly consider here the characteristic shape of his ministry as it affected the early church.

23 Ibid., p. 79.

We will look at this development in three periods, following Holmes.

1. Ancient period A.D. 30-325
2. Medieval period 325-1517
3. Modern period 1517-1914²⁴

These periods do, of course, include centuries in which the ministry of the church evolved in varied and sometimes largely different forms. Yet these periods do suggest for Holmes major shifts in the primary focus of the ministry.

The ministry of the early church as Holmes understands it is characterized not so much by the development of offices, but rather is centered around persons. McDonnell suggests "the concept of office was not central to the church in the first three centuries."²⁵ The only office which emerges is that of the presbyter or elder which he insists is taken from the Jewish tradition. In looking then at the Apostolic church as it develops he finds that it is:

largely itinerant ministry, headed by an apostle who himself is the prime ambassador of Christ, the prototype of the "sacramental person". Derived from him are numerous functions, initially most appropriate to a community in immediate anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ, but with a growing need to provide for the life of the Church during the interim.²⁶

It is the sacramental person as he develops in ministry of the Church that Holmes feels is central. Holmes postulates that all ministry can be built upon the word; apostelein-to send out, and dikomein-"to serve". These come together in the sacramental person, beginning with the Apostles.

²⁴ Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, p. 2.

²⁵ Kilian McDonnell, "Ways of Validating Ministry", Journal of Ecumenical Studies, VII (1970) p. 219.

²⁶ Ibid.

That which Holmes is exploring, has little to do with office, or even function, but more crucially with the person. And, the person for the early Christian, and for Christians today, focuses its self-understanding around Christ and his ministry. It was in the embodiment of Christ that the sacramental person provided for a ministry that represents both imminent service and the expectancy of the transcendent. For this sacramental person as he/she sought to embody Christ in the world, there was no conflict between being servant and bearing Christ as transcendent, rather these two concepts found life in one another and were integrally related.

Again, if we are to fully understand this relationship we must look closely at the person and ministry of Christ. Ronald Osborn helps us consider this embodiment.²⁷ In exploring the nature of Christ's ministry Osborn begins with servanthood, but is is a servanthood with the same union of the transcendent and immanent of which I was speaking earlier. As one begins to understand the nature of this servanthood one can begin to understand Christ and his ministry and so Holmes, ones own ministry.

Until we grasp the full drama of Jesus identification with men we shall perceive only dimly our calling in the world. We must see a mass of humanity bowed down by poverty, ignorance, oppression and disease. Jesus behavior revealed his characteristic concern for humanity. When he saw crowds, he had compassion for them. Jesus of Nazareth still holds the first place in the world's imagination and in Christian confession as the archetypal "man for others." ²⁸

²⁷ Ronald Osborn, In Christ's Place (St. Louis: Bethany, 1967)

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

This "man for others" is then first and foremost a servant, and its importance as a symbol in our world.

The life of Jesus demonstrates by contrast that the essence of servanthood is humanity. Ministry is complete and joyful acceptance of one's life in the world, a yearning and compassionate affirmation of oneness with all men in their aloneness and their need, an uncalculating and unembarrassed participation in the pleasures which affirm humanness, an equally joyful spending of oneself---even the offering of one's life in love by standing with the world's forgotten, embittered and oppressed.²⁹

And yet it is just in such total identification with humanity that the transcendent and eternal find expression as well.

Contemplating the servantlife of Jesus, the church from the beginning had to say--that is a picture of the ultimate reality in our universe. He was more than a gentle and noble spirit who was very dear to us, who taught us a way of living from which we can never be content to part, once we have seen his face. It is not even enough to call him the best man who ever lived. We must say that this is the way things are. We have seen reality in him. We have looked into the face of truth. This is not merely to say that truth is built into the structure of things and Jesus was true, that mercy is an indestructible reality in our universe (a proposition that is self-evident) and that Jesus was merciful. Rather it is to say the quality which supremely characterized his life, his identification in self-giving love with every man in his need and aloneness, this quality was not just a peculiar and admirable trait of Jesus of Nazareth: it is a manifestation of the ultimate order of things as personal. In his love for man Jesus was not just being himself: he was showing us reality beyond himself. He told of a good shepherd ranging through the dark and the wild to find a lost sheep; but that was not just a story, rather his life was that deed. He made known eternal love, seeking us in him.³⁰

I quote Osborn in length because it is in the transcendent nature of the servant-life in Christ that seems to be portrayed in Holmes sacramental person and that is central to this study. It was in the attempt to bear Christ in the world that the early "apostles"

²⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

³⁰ Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, p. 22.

discovered their call. And it is this image of the "sacramental person" which Holmes traces through our history. It was the quality and aliveness of this form of ministry that was vital in the early church and which continued to provide a measurement and goal for Christ's ministry and church. Through the centuries as we assess the nature of ministry this sacramental person as described above will provide a "transcendent servanthood" that is for Holmes at the heart of Christian ministry.

As the ministry of the church begins to pass from the apostolate and the New Testament witnesses, the Church's life undergoes a change. "The institution and its' life is more and more understood as the instrument of Christ's salvific activity in history. This understanding requires an order, so that Christ might be truly perceived and an allegiance to true teaching be developed, so that no one may be deceived as to the real content of the faith and a proper observance of the cultic act, so that our unity might be manifest."³¹

The kerygmatic proclamation of the good news doesn't disappear during this period, but it certainly becomes more institutionalized. The charismatic prophet fades. The church was now a church struggling with doctrinal conflicts. There was during the second and third centuries little room for the freedom which the prophets had exercised. As this charismatic figure faded, what developed was the bishop as the sacramental person. They became the chief mode of ministry of the church in this time. And the presbyterate began a two hundred year

31 Ibid., p. 24.

period of empty honor. "There is no question but that he (the Bishop) has become the sacramental person, providing in himself the encounter with God in Christ."³²

By the time of Iranaeus, the bishop is spoken of as the successor of the apostles. And, says Holmes, if we look at the "Apostolic Tradition," attributed to Hippolytus around 215, the connection of the bishop with the apostolic tradition of the sacramental person is clear.

The bishop was to be a shepherd (an image identified with the sacramental person) to serve as high priest, to forgive sins, and to free men from demonic bondage.

Dix says the bishop was seen as:

The man of his own Church....the sacramental person. This is the prime emphasis upon the nature of the ministry in the church from the time of Paul and it is to this that functions of ministry are related. The pre-eminent ministry is that of those who, not only in word, but in their very person embody the Christ.³³

It may be easy for us here to be distracted by the image of the bishop as it is present to us today, or as it has been practiced in more recent history. But, the bishop in the early church was not an impersonal functionary, rather he was one who was personally involved with the members of his community. This concern increasingly involved the bishop with discipline of members of the body "not so much as a matter of an individual getting right with God", but as a restoration to the source of all health in the Body of Christ. It was this understanding of the "care of souls" of individuals within the body that

³² Ibid.

³³ Gregory Dix, "The Ministry in the Early Church," in K.E. Kirk (ed) The Apostolic Ministry (London: Houghton & Stoughton, 1946), p. 228, cited by Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, p. 10.

was central to the bishop as sacramental person. Here is the definition of that person as Holmes sets him within his culture.

If we are going to understand the pattern of ministerial function in the ancient Church, we must remember that with all its inhumanity, the world at this time was extremely personal. The rich man knew the poor man who slept at the gate of his house... therefore, it is no surprise that the successor of the Apostles, the representative of Christ himself, sat in practically every eucharistic assembly and knew his people by name as any good shepherd. It is hard to describe the sacramental person as a ministerial function. As a respected leader of the community, willing to suffer torture, exile, or death for the Kingdom he believed imminent, he embodied the expectancy of the transcendent with the immanence of the personal. He more "was" than "did", but certainly all functions derived their authority from his person which was a living thing in the small community of the ancient Church.³⁴

Thus, the sacramental-transcendent-servant continued to act as the measure of ministry. And though in the developing of the early Church it became more institutionalized and changed forms in some ways, by in large it remained faithful to its origins in the ministry and person of Jesus.

As Ronald Osborn lays out his understanding of ministry which evolves from the servanthood of Christ, he asserts that it takes three characteristic forms. These can, I think, help us understand the symbol of the sacramental person as it develops in Christ and continues with the apostles and bishops. He discovers the Apostle, Shepherd and Priest moving at the heart of the New Testament thinking about Christ and his ministry. They are fundamental to our thinking about the church and its ministry as we seek to follow that ministry. We discover Jesus the servant as sent into the world, caring for the world,

34 Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, pp. 31-32.

and praying for the world. In these forms, the attempt to embody God in the way of Christ is seen. They represent when combined, God incarnate coming to humanity, in servant form, caring for and identifying with humanity in shepherd form and taking humanity to God in the form of the priest. When taken together, the transcendent and the servant are united. It was a unique combination of these three forms that was present in the sacramental person of the bishop in the early church.³⁵

Yet, it would be a mistake to assume that it was only with the apostolate or bishop that such incarnation occurred. In fact, at the heart of the New Testament ministry and in the vitality of the New Testament Church there is implicit a "new life" which invigorated the whole church. The servanthood called forth a building up of the body that initially had little to do with a listing of virtues and good counsel, but rather that found a radical new life in the spirit.

McNeill pursues this point when he says:

When we read in their several contexts phrases like these: Let everyone speak truth to his neighbor, for we are members of one another forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us... Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph. 4:25, 32, 5:2, 21) For the grace of God has appeared...training us to live sober, upright and Godly lives awaiting our blessed hope (Tit. 2: 11-13) As he who has called you is holy be holy yourselves. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we have loved the brethren (I. Jn. 3:14)...we become inescapably aware of the emergence in early Christianity of a new dynamic for personal moral living, the realizing of a power for a new therapy of souls with which nothing else in the ancient world could compete.³⁶

³⁵ Osborn, p. 90.

³⁶ McNeill, pp. 84-85.

This new dynamic centered not so much in the relationship between priest and parishioner as in the practices of mutual edification (*aedificatio mutua*) and fraternal correction (*correptio fraterna*). This is apparent in Paul. "Encourage one another and build one another up" (I Thess. 5:11), or in Colossians where the author prays for a rich endowment of the "Word of Christ as they teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). And again the Epistle of James in the second century stresses the mutuality of responsibility, but this time with regard to confession (James 5:16).

The task of embodying Christ was not then one attempted only by apostles and bishops, rather it was the task of each Christian and each Christian was to aide others in the community in that task. As McNeill remarks:

The mutuality and brotherliness of the Christian life shine in these passages. Men were to be spiritually available to one another for help and criticism. The highest approval was bestowed upon the earnest believer who feels impelled to seek a lapsed and wandering member and bring him back from the error of his way, saving his soul from death (James 5:19).³⁷

It was to this community of persons seeking to build up the body that the early sacramental person ministered. They called their communities' participants to no less radical servanthood and incarnation of Christ than themselves. This quality and spirit became characteristic of the early church and its vividness marked it as unique within its surroundings.

However, this dynamic fraternal growth in the "new life" in Christ which were so characteristic of the early church was increasingly

37 Ibid., p. 86.

sacrificed (like the charismatic prophets) to the institutionalized church in the coming centuries. As the church became more and more ordered, the ministry became more "set apart". With this development, the responsibility for and practice of mutual edification and the charismatic "growth in the spirit" changed. Previously the bishop had been called to embody in his person that to which all were called. Such a symbol is as we have suggested a task that will shape the success of ministry continuously, but now with the drawing in and institutionalizing of the task, much has been changed. The fervor of new life has seldom been recovered.

The environment saw many Christians without the radical confession which earlier Christians had embraced. So there were struggles about the tasks of discipline, admonition and consolation. As the period continued the role of those "set apart" was increasingly involved more with these tasks and less with other pastoral tasks. Their situation is assessed by McNeill:

They would not question the New Testament affirmation of "newness of life in Christ, but, living in an age in which Christianity was more often professed than inwardly embraced they devised ways of penance and of soul care for people who exhibited little evidence of inner transformation. They tended to rely rather upon the enlistment of the human will than upon the life-giving experience of which early Christians were aware...The simple lists of New Testament sins would give place to a detailed catalogue of sins which must be systematically checked and overcome.³⁸

This development marks the end of the period of the Sacramental person of the early church. By the end of this period, the nature of the minister as servant and in the care of souls had become largely

38 Ibid., pp.110-111.

consumed with these tasks of discipline and proper behavior. We see here the shift from the early picture of the community of "new life" guided by one who with them sought to embody Christ. The early focal figure of the transcendent person as one who provided the example of that in which we were all called to share, gradually gave way to a community in perpetual warfare with sins and to a pastor or bishop who was called to act as a guide of authority, applying rebuke, counsel and penance. Something of the mutuality and liberating power of that New Testament community had already been lost and those elements would be sought again and again in the history of the faithful and their ministers.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD: THE SACRAMENTAL RITE

The Council of Nicea represents a convenient breaking point in what Holmes suggests was a gradual transition in the character of the church. It was marked by an altered function of the Christian ministry from the sacramental person to an understanding of ministry that would shape the next 1000 years, with a few exceptions.

He divides it into three periods: the Heroic (500-1100), the Renaissance (1100-1300), and the Late (1300-1500). Two issues arose early for the post Nicene church that affected the nature of Christian ministry and mission throughout the periods, urging the change of which we have spoken. First, Constantine's declaration of Christianity as a permitted religion around 312 brought a change of understanding. With such a decision the question of who would control matters of church and state was raised in a different light for

Christians. This move saw increasing involvement of the Episcopate with the government and such a "legitimizing" moved the walls of the church to a much more universal dimension.³⁹

Second, the falling of Rome to the Visigoths in 410 meant the ingression of new, pagan religious ideas to which Christianity must respond. This assimilation of a world view which was more tribal, primitive and numinous changed the understanding of the faith in some ways and called for an increased clarity of teaching in the midst of divergent culture. Both of these issues led to an increase in "institutionalizing" the tradition and in discipline and overseeing. In attempts to clarify and define its faith amidst this continuing and growing divergence of teaching, general councils were held. These followed one after another (Nicea, 325, I Constantinople 381, Ephesus, 431, Chalcedon 451, etc.). Many local and provincial meetings were held in addition. All of these required the presence of the bishop.⁴⁰

The shift in ministerial function is clear. What began to develop was an episcopacy that was more interested in securing commitment of the faithful to the affirmations of the council than in providing a personal knowledge of Christ. The bishop who had once been the shepherd of the church, the sacramental person, servant, was now giving way increasingly to an institutional and administrative functionary.

This preoccupation of bishops with other work and the rapidly increasing number of Christians gave rise to the development of the

39 Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, p. 33.

40 Ibid., pp. 34-37.

parish priest, beginning in the fourth century. Holmes traces its emergence:

The presbyterate, out of which the sacramental person of the bishop had emerged as the focal office of the local congregation...but which had been a largely empty position in the past 300 years, now regained its central position, but with a difference. It never captured the role of the sacramental person assumed by the episcopate. Instead it functioned as a sacramental instrument.⁴¹

The priest now became "the instrument of the sacramental rite". A look at the origins and development of the presbyterate in this period as parish priest suggests the reasons for the shift.

With an increasing number of Christians and few bishops around, the need for someone to tend the flock became crucial. But, since in the preceding years the office of the presbyterate had been all but emptied, there were few qualified persons to assume leadership. Thus, in an effort to fill this gap and to maintain the structure of the feudal system, many priests were recruited. They came, often under duress, from the classes of serfs to be the "instrument" of the church as priest. There quickly developed a clear distinction between the high clergy, bishops and episcopate and the low clergy, parish priests. This distinction was clearly present in the education accorded the two classes. And many of the local priests, simply taken from the ranks of their common persons, were unable to even understand the Latin which they read. Their function was to simply be the "instrument through which the success of the journey to heaven was assured".⁴² As Clebsch and Jaekle state, the "ladder of humility" which was the principle tool of

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴² Ibid., p. 40.

pastoral care, symbolizing ascent from earth to heaven, had its bottom rung at the local altar.⁴³

This form of ministry as assessed theologically, can be criticized for its lack of wholeness and mechanistic function and sociologically it seems clear that the parish priest functioned frequently to maintain the medieval feudal system. Still, as one assesses its ability to meet the needs of the people, the conclusion suggests that "among a people whose religion was largely magical and for whom the subtleties of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Rome would be sheer jibberish, the near ignorant parish priest nonetheless provided a referent of meaning. He performed rituals consistent with the people's self-consciousness and was effective in communicating a redemptive dimension to their lives."⁴⁴

The priest was at least one among them and "did the best he could with what was available to him and maintained through it all a deep faith in God".⁴⁵ As the functionary instrument, he was central in the numinous development of the sacramental rite's importance. This rite served the transcendent function of ministry to the medieval people.

"Be it ninth century or thirteenth century, for the average Christian right up until the time of the Reformation, the primary function of ministry was the miraculous daily repetition by the parish priest of Christ's bloody sacrifice. It was beside the point that the worshipper understood not one word said."⁴⁶

43 William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 21-22, Cited by Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, p. 41.

44 Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, pp. 42-43.

45 Ibid., p. 43.

46 Ibid.

And yet this recruitment of untrained men, with few skills to be instruments of the "sacramental rite" led to two difficulties in the pre-reformation years; the abuses growing out of the penitential system and the loss of the sacramental person, that transcendent function of the priest.

McNeill traces the change in penitential discipline which develops during this period.

By the thirteenth century a type of penitential discipline had come to prevail in the Western Church which was widely different from that of the Patristic Age. Instead of being public and usual, confession and penance had become private, frequent and common to all. The discipline was embraced within the sacramental system of the medieval church and priests rather than bishops were its principle administrators.⁴⁷

The medieval penitential system constituted one of the most controversial issues of the reformation and it was to the history of its abuses that the reformers focused their attention. Its development can be seen in the increasing use of penitential guides, the most influential of which were those of the Celtic writers. These penitential guides were written as practical guides for confessors to help equip them in the practical moral and spiritual guidance of their confessants. To the uneducated parish priest who found himself increasingly involved in confession these books no doubt proved invaluable and probably served to provide discipline in "an age when the peoples of Europe were in mass slowly appropriating the heritage of Christianity. They must have helped redeem them from superstition, inhumanity and vice and to set their feet on the pathway of spiritual and moral advance."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ McNeill, p. 113.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

But one of the difficulties was that these books frequently used a medical model, understanding sin as sickness and visa versa, and assigned the appropriate penance to match the sin. Later penitentials carried out this tariff assignment in great detail. This focus greatly affected a change in one's understanding of the condition of the soul and the qualifications for salvation. While the focus on specific acts of sin and the separation between virtues and vices is important, lest one treat sin as a state and not be serious about sinful acts, I would agree with Holmes that "the meticulous enumeration of detailed sins may set up an obsession and prove a hinderance to deliverance. Such a method unless conducted with greatest wisdom, tends to make the conscientious man or woman unwholesomely, scrupulous and introverted."⁴⁹ This understanding marks a definite shift from the New Testament's understanding of inner renovation to the anxious routine of penances.

The development of this type of clergy functioning led frequently to a commercialism and abuse which fueled the fires of reformation. The symbol of the "sacramental person" as one whose personhood was as important as his doing had given way to a mechanical and juridicial symbol of the religious leader. The priest became more authoritative, but less transcendent-servant oriented. This loss is the judgement of the medieval period.

As we suggested earlier, the parish priest attempted to assume

⁴⁹ Kenneth Leech, Soul Friend (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977) p. 401.

the role of the chief functionary in the medieval church. He became the functionary by the providing of the sacramental rite. The trouble is that the parish priest doesn't come off as a very convincing Christ figure. He was too conventional to be the local sacramental person and, therefore, he did little to contribute substantially to the visible presence of the personal incarnate Lord. He did holy things but it was difficult to think of him as the holy man. Neither his education nor his way of living set him apart from the laity. And even more important perhaps, his function in dispensing judicial, mechanical rites, did little to involve him in transcendent functions.

The loss of this transcendent person created a gap in the image of priest that would be missing for centuries to come. The medieval church saw this function of the transcendent as embodied in the pope, the Vicar of Christ. Yet again a distinction must be made between dogmatic functioning and teaching and the personal presence of Christ in the community.

But, perhaps this tradition of the transcendent person continued in another arena in this period. In the developing orders of the religious, there were men and women who discovered and embodied this transcendent function in ways that had few before or since. They took up the call of prophesy crying out against the corruption and heresy of the church. They saw the importance of the "holiness of the person" and dedicated their lives to that vocation. They sought to take seriously the call to be Christ in the world, to be transcendent-servants.

From the lives and writings of these persons we begin to discover a depth of Christ's presence in our world that serves all who

would enter into the journey with Christ and who struggle with others in this journey. In the Desert Fathers, from Anthony the Great, this vocation of spiritual guidance is pursued. The important thing about these men and women for the medieval period (as well as our own) is that they understood spiritual direction not as a technique or series of mechanistic rites but as the assistance of a "father who helped shape the inner life of his sons through prayer, concern and pastoral care. Here were the charismatic Holy men in the wilderness.⁵⁰ These men spoke of prayer out of the depths of their own lives. Their tradition continued with others such as Evagrius and Cassian.

There is present in the Eastern tradition such a developing function as well, as is seen in the Russian startsys such as Bishop Dmitri and others earlier. It is said of them that they sought to be "a living symbol of the good shepherd....here one discovers an episcopal life in which the administrative gave place to the spiritual director."⁵¹ The contrast with the West is apparent.

In the West, it was men such as St. Gregory the Great (540-604) who sought to develop an alternative understanding of the care of souls to the medical model under which the penitential system frequently operated. Bernard of Clairvaux sought to develop a similar model of the spiritual guide. Many others could be included (we will assess the contribution of the spiritual guide for contemporary period later); what is important to discover here is that though these men and women made lasting contributions through their writings and lives, the tragedy

⁵⁰ McNeill, p. 163.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 164.

is that seldom were these figures related to a local congregation. They were usually involved in communities of the religious, set aside from the secular world. Though increasingly they sought to provide lay education and involvement. Yet it was difficult to overcome the prevailing image and function of the priest in that period. They provided spiritual guidance that speaks just as clearly today, but the dominant image of that period remains the parish priest and the sacramental rite.

MODERN PERIOD: THE SACRAMENTAL WORD

It was in matters concerning the cure of souls that the German reformation had its inception. Luther's predecessors in Wyclif and Huss were clear in their denouncement of indulgences which they saw as blasphemous. For that both were burned at the stake (Wyclif's bones were later buried). They were representative of a growing fire which was kept smoldering by the statements of certain of the "religious". With the advent of the printing press and Luther's bold action on All Saints Eve in 1517, it could no longer be suppressed. Luther's 95 theses began with these two propositions.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he said "Repent" - poenitentiam agite - willed that the whole life of the believer should be repentance.

2. This word cannot be understood as referring to sacramental penance, that is confession and satisfaction, which is performed in the ministration' of priest.⁵²

This event marked a shifting of epochs. Though the change was

52 Ibid.

occupied more broadly from 1517 to 1648 and beyond, Holmes marks this event and those that followed it representative of the shift to an epoch in which the ministry would be not of the Sacramental Rite, but to the Sacramental Word. Luther himself is symbolic of that change.

Luther was representative of others whose concern was that simple people were being deceived. They were being led to believe that if they bought indulgence certificates they could be sure of salvation and that in fact when the coin clinked in the box, the souls of their loved ones in purgatory flew to heaven. This jingle from an indulgence seller parodies the abuse.

Sobld der Pfenig im Kasten klingt,
Die Seele aus dem Fefeurer springt.

When in the chest the penny rings,⁵³
The soul from purgatory springs.

Such a practice flew in the face of Luther's emerging belief regarding the nature of sin, grace and redemption. This is clear in a letter he sent accompanying his "Theses" to his Archbishop of Mianz.

I grieve over the utterly false notions the people have conceived..
unhappy souls...O good God! I could keep silence no longer...
Works of piety and love are infinitely better than indulgences...
Christ never commanded that indulgences be preached but he
emphatically commanded that the Gospel be preached.⁵⁴

Luther came to believe that there was a fundamental difference between the current understanding of repentance and justification and that of the gospels. In studying Matt. 4, he became convinced that the Greek word *metanoeite*, usually taken to mean doing penance, rather meant "coming to one's senses." "It involved a change in our heart and our

53 Ibid., p. 165.

54 Ibid., p. 167.

love in response to God's grace. From being a word of bitterness, poenitentia had become to him a sweet and pleasing one."⁵⁵ He had come to regard the word as also including within its meaning not only the change but also the caring and transforming agency of God's grace.

With these distinction operative, Luther sought to enter what he understood to be a "moderate protest". His protest was not so much against true penance, but rather against the substitution of a secondary remission for true penance. That is, he did not think that any form of penitential punishment was an adequate substitute for true repentance of the heart.

The penitent had become so troubled by the strain of recalling every minute point that he or she was diverted from his/her desire for a better life, thus frequently found confession a "laborious task". This did not mean confession should be ended for Luther. Rather he says:

Of private confession I am heartily in favor...It is a cure without an equal for distressed consciences. For when we have laid bare our conscience to our brother; privately made known to him the evil that lurked within, we receive from our brother's lips the word of comfort spoken by God himself; and if we accept it in faith we find peace in the mercy of God speaking to us through our brother.⁵⁶

The importance of confession for Luther is viewed with a pastoral eye, sensitive to the distress of the conscience rather than from the viewpoint of ecclesiastical authority. He saw his task as the deliverer of troubled consciences, and spent much time in individual guidance of souls, hearing confessions and advising other clergy about this role. In the writings of many of his early followers the emphasis on direction to the minister involved in "guidance of souls" is prominent. These would

55 Ibid., p. 192.

56 Ibid., pp. 216-217.

include the writings of Bugenhagen Regius and Myconius. But, one of the earliest of reformers to direct specific attention to this task was Zwingli in his 1524 sermon "The Pastor".

Yet in the words of that sermon the characteristic mode of this care of souls in the third epoch can be seen. What is important is "the faithful preaching of repentance from the Scripture. But the proclamation must be followed up by instruction and devoted service to the people."⁵⁷ This statement is characteristic of the mode and priority of the reformation and modern church. Though the care of individual souls was important the primary way in which one ministered to that struggling soul was through the preaching or teaching of the Word. This is the shift to "minister of the sacramental Word" which Holmes suggests is characteristic of this epoch.

While there are important differences between the German and the Continental reformed groups, both are largely in agreement as they consider the "abuses of the medieval pastoral office". The reformed tradition in Switzerland was no less than Luther concerned with this abuse. Both Zwingli and Calvin vigorously discarded the medieval notion of the requirement of confession and affirmed on scriptural grounds the sufficiency of unmediated confession to God by the penitent soul. Both prized the value of mutual confession and exhortation and of private, secret confession. Though usually with a priest, this might quite properly be done with a trusted friend.⁵⁸

57 Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, pp. 60-61.

58 Ibid., p. 60.

In its understanding of ministerial function, the Reformed tradition placed a greater stress on activism in discipline. Still for all of the reformers there is represented in their lives and thought a major shift in world views and in ministerial self-understanding.

"Between the heritage of medievalism and the new ideal of Renaissance and Reformation, there is a synthesis which developed a milieu that bred a new type of cleric."⁵⁹ This cleric would be characterized by the Ministry of the Word, and would discover, strangely enough, an increased load.

This new clergyman was destined to carry most of the burden of ministry upon his own shoulders.⁶⁰ Personified by the figures of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others, the man was to be well educated. His task was a functional one. As with Lutheranism today this minister of the Word was "ordained to fill a cure; that is in response to the call of the congregation to minister the Sacraments and preach the Word to them. He is ordained to perform a function, not to an order..."⁶¹ For Luther the continuity of the church was found not in structures of ministerial priesthood, but in the priesthood of all believers expressed in the proclamation of the Word. Unfortunately, as we have noted above, the Reformation clergy person found that more was on his or her shoulders. As Christopher Brook makes the point, "the tragedy of the modern period is that despite the affirmation of the priesthood of all believers and occasional vital roles for laymen such as in Pietism and the Methodist

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁰ Pierre Janelle, The Catholic Reformation (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1963) pp. 115-20 as cited by Holmes, Future Shape of Ministry, p. 69.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 62.

movement, the enthusiasm was lacking and there was a growing spirit of professionalism both in terms of Catholic and Protestant scholasticism that left the layman in a more passive role."⁶²

As the church moves from the Reformation period to that of Scholasticism, the trend toward a professional and functional clergy is enhanced. The effective clergyperson is increasingly the learned man or woman. There is little difference between Catholics and Protestants in this regard. All ecclesiastical education in this time did as Pierre Janelle reminds us, have its roots in the humanist movement and, in particular, in the work of the Brothers of the Common Life.⁶³

The stress that develops during this period is clearly on doing rather than being. "The Reformation initially was an act of prophesy of speaking forth against the moral abuses of the day and the apparent theological support for them. From this stemmed an emphasis upon the preaching and teaching function of the local pastor."⁶⁴ As it became more profoundly influenced by the enlightenment, there developed in this an increasing love of order, with everything having its place. In Descarte the essence of humanity is found in his/her abstract cognitive powers, divorced from the irrational passions. This philosophy set the philosophical tone for three hundred years and did, as we will see, have great impact upon the church and the nature of ministry as well. A sense of discipline and repugnance at uncontrolled behavior followed. "The purpose, therefore, of preaching and teaching and particularly

62 Ibid., pp. 70-71

63 Ibid., p. 76

64 Ibid., p. 82

training of clergy was to be formation in Christ who is both personal savior and Logos -- the eternal source of truth in all life. The disciplined life accorded with the universal order."⁶⁵

An example of this kind of training is found in Ignatius. The purpose of ministry was to become disciplined servants who in their lives embodied the truth they taught. The priest or pastor suggested emerges as an educated man, disciplined and destined to preach and teach an approved theology to a people literate and interested in ideas. It sounds like a ministry to the court of the middle class and it largely was. There is little doubt that the ministerial function was one which understood itself as preaching the Word, and in the way it was most generally preached, it was most applicable to the middle classes.

The function of this preaching ministry was aimed particularly at the strengthening of the faith of the weak. It sought to convict people of their sins. As was noted in Zwingli's sermon and is characteristic of the ministry of the Word through the nineteenth century, even the pastoral care which was specifically directed at individuals or at the sick and infirmed were opportunities to preach another sermon. Though there is increasing use of the term parson, it can scarcely be assumed that those who carried the title embodied its original meaning. Its meaning carries the sense of "the person" of the parish who is the embodiment of the whole man in Christ. But there is, says Holmes, ample evidence that the post-Reformation person rarely lived up to the embodiment of the whole man in Christ, the Sacramental person. They failed because of the worldliness of the clergy, which

65 Ibid.

stood in direct contradiction to the piety of the age. But, even more important was the distinction between low and high clergy. The high clergy were destined to be bishops, court priests and pastors of the better benefices and the lower clergy, the poorer benefices and vicars of the curates.

These later clergy tended to come not from the middle classes, but from the simple folk. In fact, middle class clergy were a nineteenth century development. Consequently these lower clergy, without a natural status in the community and generally lacking in the kind of education afforded higher clergy, the country parson was capable of fulfilling the role of the sacramental person "only in the case of the truly heroic saintliness. Therefore, the poor were given a church uniquely suited to the middle and upper classes. As we have seen, most of the more educated priests went to positions of higher status, leaving the less educated clergy in poorer parishes. The preaching of the more educated priests when they were heard was uniquely suited to a more literate, educated congregation. The poor were again lost in this rational discourse and rhetorical flourish which characterized the period.

For them and many others, the pietist movement met this need. The Catholic pietists in Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross or Francis of Sales stressed a deepening of individual spiritual and devotional life. Among protestants, Philipp Spenser founded the Pietists movement which found its focus in "identification with Jesus, reinforced through group prayer and Bible reading."⁶⁶ The development of these movements is a trend which is worth considering as it relates to the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 76.

nature of the church, its ministry and mission. Holmes makes an observation which will provide input for considering later developments. He asserts:

It is my observation that whenever ministerial function becomes excessively rational and emotionally arid or commits itself to the work amid the power structures of society or is identified with them, both of which happen with avengence in the seventeenth century, a reaction of this kind (pietist) sets in. Its ministerial form is either devotional or a gathering of esoteric groups.⁶⁷

This is what happened in the seventeenth century and led to the movement of the Pietists and later the Moravians and Methodists. These movements provided an enthusiasm and emotion that involved the poor as they hadn't been involved for long periods of time. They gained thousands of followers (particularly for the Methodists), and the message of Christ's gospel found its expression in the "preaching of the Sacramental Word. While Wesley and Whitefield developed a ministry that was more accessible and understandable to the common person, it was through their preaching that they gained audiences and converts.

The same spirit of ministry was true in America as well. In the 1730's the American church was rocked by the "great awakening". The movement was led by Jonathan Edwards, and highlighted by the preaching of George Whitefield on a visit to America. It was largely a Calvinistic movement "characterized by vivid reminders of the horrors of hell that awaited the damned".⁶⁸ In 1797 another similar movement, the Great Revival, began on the American frontier, centering in Kentucky. It attempted to bring religion to those who were separated from the "institutions" of the church by hundreds of miles. It sought to

67 Ibid., p. 76-77.

68 Ibid., p. 82.

evangelize the rugged frontier spirits. There developed many itinerant evangelists whose style was frequently so emotionally packed that it produced great shows of hysteria, barking, shaking and weeping attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit. These events were important social gatherings for persons who were frequently separated from their nearest neighbor by miles. They came to be called "camp meetings", a particular form of the "ministry of the Word" which became a part of the fabric of America's religious life for the next century.

This Great Revival marked a shift in momentum as well, with the momentum swinging from "the Presbyterian-Congregational-Episcopal axis to the Methodist-Baptist-Disciple axis".⁶⁹ As children of this swing in momentum and as uniquely American, the Disciples movement provides a good way for us to consider the continued development of the ministry of the Sacramental Word in America and its waning influence in this century.

69 Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

THE SACRAMENTAL WORD IN DISCIPLE TRADITION

There are few traditions for whom the "sacramental Word" has played a more important role than for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), although some would scarcely call it "sacramental". The Disciples, a child of the enlightenment and Great Revival, were birthed in America and have placed nothing more central to their foundation and thought than the Scriptures.

The Bible is implicit in their self-understanding and pervades the order and philosophy of the movement. Thomas Campbell, one of the founders, so characterized the shift from Sacramental person and rite to the Sacramental Word that he rejected the title "Reverend" as presumptuous and unscriptural and appended his signature V.D.M. Verbi Divini Minister, minister of the Word of God.¹ The rallying cry for an earlier association of which Campbell was a part was "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where they are silent, we are silent." That understanding is suggestive of the relationship between Disciples and the Word. The entire form and nature of the church and ministry is, for Disciples, to be developed out of the dispensations of the Scripture. Both the Campbells and Barton Stone, as founders of the movement, sought to develop a doctrine of ministry which was based on the "ancient order of things". This was to be a standing and immutable ministry.

¹ Lester McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book (St. Louis: Bethany, 1954) p. 147.

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES UPON DISCIPLES' MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The Disciples' movement and its founders arise out of and seek to continue the reformed tradition. They stretched the "Ministry of the Word" further than any we have as yet studied. Yet, they are characteristic of many traditions who discovered a shift in ministry from the Sacramental Word to more diverse and vague roles in the contemporary period. As we will see because the movement began on American soil and grew up on the frontier, they have been uniquely subject to the positive and negative effects of the American culture on the Christian faith.

As were previous traditions before them, the Disciples were shaped greatly by their history and by the cultural setting in which they found themselves. William Martin Smith makes this point when he remarks that any student of Disciple history must realize:

First, they came from places with substantial backgrounds which conditioned their lives and thoughts, introducing the basic religious and social problems as they saw them. Secondly, they came into something--a culture, a society, a totally new, fully American atmosphere that greatly modified everything they brought.²

The movement and especially its ministry were, like traditions in other periods, vitally shaped by their history and cultural environment. I would suggest that the tradition has been shaped by two broad influences: that of their intellectual backgrounds, both religious and philosophic, and, secondly, the American spirit of liberty and democracy. The first influence, arising out of the heritage of reformation and enlightenment, took the form of primarily deepening the

² William Martin Smith, Servants Without Hire (Nashville: D.O.C. Historical Society, 1978) p. 12.

ministry of and to the Sacramental Word. The second influence, the spirit of liberty comes in part from reactions to past abuses of the power of the ministry and ecclesiastical figures; but, primarily, it is shaped by the pervasive spirit of liberty, equality and democracy present in post-Revolution America. These two influences proved a powerful force in shaping the tradition of not only the Disciples movement but, also, that of many other denominations as they struggled to create a reformed church in America. These struggles influenced the ecclesiology and nature of ministry in ways which have continued up to the present.

As the nineteenth century begins in America, we find that the focus of preaching in the ministry is at least as prevalent as in the sixteenth century. Raymond Cunningham has pointed out that this central role continues throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The central role of the preaching office is illustrated by this statement by George Baxter:

While the church is considered the pillar and ground of the truth, preaching must, beyond all question, be regarded as its most important duty...the preaching of the gospel by the living voices.. has in all the ages been the principle instrument in the hands of the Lord, by which the church has been advanced.³

There is little doubt in the foregoing statement that the transcendent function of ministry, though changing in some ways, is still primarily seen in the preaching of the Word. And while the preaching turns to a concern with the individual more directly, the method of ministering to that individual is through offering them the "Sacramental

3 Raymond J. Cunningham, "From Preacher of the Word to Physician of the Soul: The Protestant Pastor of the Nineteenth Century America," Journal of Religious History, III (1965) p. 327ff

word" through the ministry of preaching that word. This priority is lifted up by Hemen Humphrey, a nineteenth century "preacher:"

Such is the great stress which is laid upon preaching, throughout the New Testament....It is put before and above all means of human salvation, not that other modes of instruction are unimportant, but that preaching is above everything else, the divinely appointed instrument by which sinners are to be saved.⁴

So, too, were the early founders of the Disciples firmly focused on the central nature of the sacramental word and on its administration through preaching. In fact, Barton Stone was in the center of the outstanding preaching of the "Great Revival". After seeing a revival at Logan County, Kentucky, he returned to his congregation feeling that despite the excessive emotionalism and fanaticism, the good outweighed the bad and so set upon a course to have a camp meeting there at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. With that meeting, Tucker and McAllister suggest, "The Second Awakening reached its climax,"⁵ or as Charles Johnson said, "Cane Ridge was, in all probability, the most disorderly, the most hysterical, and the largest revival ever held in early-day America."⁶

For Stone, the incidents of hysteria and moral irregularities of the camp meeting were outweighed by the numbers of converts (estimates range between 1000 and 2000), the depth of the religious experience and the absence of sectarian rivalry. Of the depth of experience he later reflected, "I saw the religion of Jesus more clearly exhibited in the lives of Christians than I had ever seen before or since to the same extent." Viewing the results of this meeting, which was primarily

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ William Tucker and Lester G. McAllister, Journey in Faith (St. Louis: Bethany, 1975) p. 71.

⁶ Charles M. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting (Dallas: SMU, 1955) pp. 62-63.

focused upon preaching the word, it is not difficult to imagine how Stone became convinced of its importance.⁷

No less committed to the "Sacrament of the Word" was Thomas Campbell, another of the Disciple founders, across the sea in Scotland. Both of these early leaders, along with Alexander Campbell, Thomas' son, saw themselves as firmly within the tradition of reformation thought and did, in fact, see themselves as continuing that reformation in a way that was more consistent with the "Sacramental Word." The Protestant reformers, as we have suggested, were centrally involved in a revolt against the abuse of ecclesiastical powers and ministerial functioning regarding the care of souls. They saw it as recovering the New Testament understanding of the church in its original and essential purity. Disciple founders felt this task even more deeply, and saw themselves as completing that task. Tucker and McAllister lift up this development:

The Protestant Reformation by the nature of its development remained incomplete. It began with an attempt to go back of the complex and elaborate traditions of the medieval church to a more fundamental authority of the early church. While not opposed to tradition, the Reformation went behind tradition to the New Testament, but before its reform was complete, it bogged down in Biblical literalism and legalism. No agreement could be reached as to a correct interpretation of the Scriptures. As a result, the medieval synthesis was cut asunder with the resulting chaos of conflicting views.⁸

It is to this understanding of the importance of the Sacramental Word for the ordering of the entire life of the church that the Campbells and Stone adhere, and it is the completion of this task that motivates their ministry.

⁷ Barton Stone, Christian Messenger (July 1831) p. 165.

⁸ Tucker and McAllister, p. 91.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there emerged several other movements aimed at "restoring the New Testament Church." These movements sought "in a more literal and precise way than any of the preceding movements, to return to the exact practice of the apostolic church with reference to doctrine, ordinances, methods of worship, forms of organization and the name of the church itself. All of these groups remained small and most soon vanished, but their influence was considerable."⁹ Their impact was especially powerful upon the growth of the Disciples.

Chief among these groups in their effect upon Disciples (we are concerned here mostly with the affect upon the Campbells) were John Glas and Robert Sandeman. Both were involved in "restorationists movements." Sandeman gave more specific theological content to the movement, asserting that "faith is simple assent to the New Testament testimony concerning Christ." That "simple faith" became a hallmark concept for the Disciples' movement. Early in his ministry Alexander Campbell was accused of being a Sandemanian, a charge which he did not ignore, although he saw himself as moving beyond Sandeman.

Another movement of considerable influence was that of James and Robert Haldane. They again sought to develop an order of the church based upon the New Testament Church, suggesting that any true reformation required exact conformity to apostolic teaching and practice.¹⁰

⁹ Alfred DeGroot, The Restoration Principle (St. Louis: Bethany, 1960) Chapter VI.

¹⁰ Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948) pp. 51-52.

Thomas Campbell and his family were, during much of the time these early movements were going on, settled near the struggle, as he lived in Northern Ireland. This area was largely Calvinistic. Although Campbell was initially a member of the Anglican Church, he early on left the Church because, like many others, he was dissatisfied with its apparent lack of piety and evangelical zeal. He joined a Seceder Presbyterian Church. The Seceder Branch held firm to the idea that congregations have the right to select their own ministers. So we can see Campbell's early struggle with ecclesiastical authority and a more congregational polity. This position was further enhanced when, after attending the University of Glasgow, he attended an Anti-Burger Seceder Presbyterian Seminary. The Anti-Burgers opposed the requirement of burgesses to swear to support the established church.

While at seminary he was no doubt influenced by its dean, Archibald Bruce, who, though an orthodox Calvinist in theology, held to a congregational polity. As he began his ministry he was involved with the Haldanes' Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home and others who encouraged more evangelical preaching. Again, the emphasis in these movements was on preaching, simple New Testament Christianity. These combined influences increased Campbell's reverence for the Scriptures (New Testament) as the basis for church organization. They also deepened his conviction that the existence of sects was a hindrance to the success of the gospel.

Thus, as Campbell left for America in 1807, two sets of influences were already operative as influences on Thomas and, later, on Alexander: first, the reformed tradition and the particular

restorationist movements which grew out of that tradition. The specific focus of these for the Campbells was on the New Testament as an order of the church, and on the call of the ministry as "ministers of this Word", the simple faith of the gospel. The second influence, of which we shall say more later, was that of the Enlightenment. Suffice it here to say that the Campbells came to America with a previous belief in the assessibility of Christianity to all and its provision of a reasonable order.

These two influences combined in a unique way as the Campbells moved to America in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The commitment to the Sacramental Word not only influenced the nature of the church and its mission, but was, as suggested, the order on which that mission and ministry were built. This direction can be seen in a later statement by Alexander Campbell regarding the importance of a New English translation:

a perfect English Bible, for an English people, is needed for three purposes: the first, for the union of true Christians; the second, for the conversion of the world; and, the third, for the perfection of the Church.¹¹

One can see from this statement the way in which the Scriptures took on a sacramental emphasis for Campbell, becoming a source for the shaping of all areas of the Church and the world. These emphases took three basic forms as they dealt with the salvation of the individual, the union of all Christians, and with a true order or constitution for the Church. And all three of these affected the nature and purpose of the ministry. It is important to understand the nature of each of the effects.

¹¹ Millennial Harbinger (1852) pp. 187-211.

For Alexander Campbell, the ministry of the Word provided the work in enabling salvation. As can be seen below, the "Word" becomes clearly sacramental:

The Word of God is but a specific embodiment of the Holy Spirit. It is veiled spirit or limned grace; and hence the spirit works only through the word upon the understanding, the conscience and the heart. It is suggested to prophets, apostles and the ancient evangelists in human terms or in visions and dreams, the mind and will of God to man.

We must either picture to the eye or address to the ear, the ideas, the sentiments or the volitions of the Holy Spirit. By the machinery of language, presented either to the eye or ear, we communicate our views and desires to God and he communicates to us his mind and will by the word of his Spirit...

The entrance of the word---the breath of Almighty into the human heart---imparts Spiritual life, and creates us anew or puts into motion, Godward, the moral feelings of our nature.¹²

Here can be seen the combination of that emphasis on the centrality of the Word and the impact of the Enlightenment. They join together in this passage to show the way in which the tradition's founders understood the process of human salvation. One of the characteristics most central to the developing movement was the firm belief that anyone who approached the scriptures with a sane mind, right attitude and faith could understand the "Word" and through such intellectual assertion could come to salvation. The redemption required the proper reading of the scriptures, but it did not require the "sacramental, rite or person" in a final sense. Rather, the redemptive grace became active in hearing or reading the simple gospel. This shaped, then, the function of ministry. What was required of clergy was a preaching and teaching function, both of which were directed to

¹² Millennial Harbinger (1851) pp. 483-84.

enabling the common person to get hold of this simple faith. This focus did, as we shall see, create both victories and defeats for the movement and especially for its ministry.

The Sacramental Word was also important to the context of a true uniting of all Christians. Arising out of their struggles with different ecclesiastical structures and their courts, both the Campbells and Barton Stone developed a fierce hatred for sectarian notions of the church. Both Thomas and Barton found themselves at odds over the refusal to uphold sectarian barriers, especially in a country where there were so few clergy and such a great hunger for their "simple gospel." Growing out of the tradition of Glas and the Haldanes, both sought a pattern of church which would restore the long time division between Christians and would prevent the sectarian spirit that was rampant from again denying this union. There was in the New Testament Apostolic order the perfect constitution for unity and church. Before we move on to address that constitution, it should be said that the appeal for unity would continue to shape the tradition as a part of this trinity of beliefs forming the sacramental word's mission. "It stood to reason," said Campbell, "that Deity should provide a written constitution for the church." Indeed, he flatly maintained that the Bible is the perfect bond of union because a good and benevolent God would have to give one. Political or ecclesiastical order without a written constitution was inconceivable; so the New Testament was said to be the divine constitution for the church.¹³ He rejoiced that all

¹³ Ronald Osborn, "Dogmatically Absolute, Historically Relative," Renewal of Church (1963), p. 270.

Christians were agreed in "the character of King Jesus and in the authority of his statute book."¹⁴

There is little doubt that this understanding was greatly shaped by the emphasis upon the constitution in "post-revolution" America and by Locke's theory of "social contract." These, coupled with the Reformation influences, made the "Sacramental Word" as the constitution for the church an overriding concern. Osborn assesses this influence in an article entitled "Dogmatically Absolute, Historically Relative: Conditioned Emphases in the History of Disciples of Christ." The title is suggestive of the direction which the movement would take regarding these influences. Osborn assesses those influences in their historical context as follows:

I have made no study to determine who first spoke of the New Testament as the constitution of the church. Protestant Reformers from the beginning had appealed to the Bible as their rule of faith and practice. But I propose that the preoccupation with written constitution in nineteenth century America was an important factor in the plausibility of the plea of Disciples--it was self evident --and in the growth of various restoration movements.¹⁵

He continues by suggesting that this pattern of thinking was part of a larger pattern that was often illusory:

The belief of the fathers that they could transcend history, with all its relatives and, by restoring pristine Christianity, could reach the absolute form of the church unconditioned by history--this conviction was itself conditioned. The point has been well made by Langdon Gilkey...The illusions of a lost Golden Age, of a free, pre-institutional state of nature, of the perfection of pristine society, beguiled the minds of many, especially the leading intellectuals of the late eighteenth century, and those who took them seriously.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁵ Osborn, p. 271.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 267.

It is this kind of illusion that developed at various points for the Disciple's founders and their early followers. The illusion was culturally influenced and based in the belief in a "primitive church, unsullied by history and in the belief that it was possible to reproduce that perfect church 1800 years later."¹⁷ It would attempt to bring all elements of the church and the world under this philosophy and the attempt would result in both freedom and legalism.

ORDER OF MINISTRY

This philosophy of restoration greatly affected the understanding of the clergy and their role. Campbell set about to formulate a New Testament understanding of ministry; but the historical influences of the rational, commonsense, and the stress on equality may have prevented him from developing a more pure "apostolic order." He insisted that, for the setting up of the Christian Institution, officers extraordinary were needed. "The officers and apostles in the First Century were given special gifts, but both the offices and the extraordinary gifts have ceased."¹⁸ The church now requires, says Campbell, an ordinary ministry:

The standing and immutable ministry of the (present) Christian community is composed of Bishops, Deacons, and Evangelists. Of each of these there is but one order, though possessing great diversities of gifts, there have been bishops, deacons and evangelists with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts. Still the office is now and ever was the same.¹⁹

17 Ibid.

18 Alexander Campbell, The Christian System, p. 383.

19 Ibid., p. 2

These offices were perpetual, in addition to being ordinary.

They included:

The Bishop: whose office it was to preside, to instruct and to edify the church communion...to feed the church of the Lord with knowledge and understanding and to watch for their souls as those that must give account to the Lord at his appearing and his Kingdom.²⁰

The Deacon or Servant: whether called treasurers, almoners, stewards, door keepers or messengers.

The Evangelists: Evangelists, though a class of religious functionaries, do not serve it directly, but are sent out into the world.²¹

The final emphasis of the "order of ministry" was to insist that laypersons could do everything clergy could do, if the circumstances demanded it. "They had the right to preach, to baptize, and to dispense the Lord's Supper, as well as to pray for all men...when the circumstances demanded it."²²

This united task of ministry was again a ministry of the Word. It sought to bring the Word to souls starving for liberation. This task moves us to remember the effect of and response to the influence of "the spirit of liberty and democracy" which were dominant in the young nation. It was to that task of "liberating the human spirit" that the ministry sought to direct itself. The task was broken into two functions, that of teaching and preaching the Word.

Osborn notes these two tasks "evolved in Campbell's doctrine of ministry, on two of its standing and immutable orders, evangelists and bishops, while deacons carried responsibility for service. The

20 Ibid., p. 2.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

evangelists were itinerent preachers and founders of churches."²³ The teaching task was largely carried on by Bishops.

But it was the evangelists who, in the first two generations of the movement, made up what we would call the educated or professional ministry. These were what Osborn previously described as "apostled" heralds of the Word. And while the functional separation was a difficulty, the liberating Word of the gospel which these men preached was something that came as a gift to many people, hungry for redemption in the rugged frontier existence. In the quest of the "ministry of liberation," these early Disciple evangelists saw themselves as "emancipators of the human spirit." In a time less exposed to pluralism and relativism than our own they confidently offered this gift of interior freedom.²⁴ It was through the efforts of these Disciple evangelists that the rapid growth of Disciples can be largely attributed. Osborn suggests why:

The rapid growth of Disciples in the nineteenth century and the direct word of many who responded to their preaching indicated that they were addressing a widely felt and powerful interior need. To thousands, their evangelism came as a gift of freedom. It brought liberty to act in the deep realms of the human spirit. It brought deliverance from ignorance and superstition. It offered redemption from sin and death. It promised liberation from an oppressive social system.²⁵

And yet, though the message was simple, it was devoid of much of the scholastic language and was carefully thought through. "They offered a sane, scriptural, practical message of salvation. If their preaching

²³ Ronald Osborn, Experiment in Liberty (St. Louis: Bethany, 1978) p. 72.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

was suffused with emotion of great concern, it was guided by reason which carefully searched the scriptures and the human heart. And the message came as a liberating word."²⁶

Though there is little doubt that these evangelists served more as the instrument of the liberating Word and less as the sacramental person, they provided an opportunity for God's grace to emerge. Though the Word was funneled through them to a frontier people, it provided God's transcendent message in ways which were often uniquely suited to that time. For the people, too, were largely out of the same background as the founders and were disgusted with the abuses of clergy as well. They were part of a time that was fiercely individualistic, which believed that persons could do everything for themselves. So the emphasis of the movement may have offered them that message in a way that was quite fitting with their self-understanding. Still, out of this early understanding of ministry we received not only a proud heritage, but also difficulties for ministers and their churches which would continue to emerge.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF DISCIPLES' HERITAGE

The Disciple tradition has left an assortment of strengths and weaknesses for its ministry. A continuing inheritance is that of the liberating Word as it was presented to frontier Americans. Ronald Osborn sketches the surrounding element in which this redemptive word was functioning:

The dominant theological understanding in American Protestantism when Disciples came on the scene was Calvinism. Ever since the

26 Ibid.

Reformation, the preachers of that persuasion had rung the changes on a rigid doctrine of double predestination, divine election to salvation and divine reprobation to eternal punishment, which left the most conscientious person utterly helpless in respect to one's spiritual condition. Those who were consistent taught that it was improper for an unredeemed person even to pray for deliverance since the divine decrees had already determined the outcome from before the foundation of the world. Many persons facing the raw uncertainty of life on the frontier suffered untold anguish as they agonized about their eternal fate.²⁷

As it met the egalitarian spirit of America, the Calvinist doctrine of election ran into trouble. Methodists and others set themselves against it, as did many revivalists from orthodox traditions. But the Presbyterians among those who softened their stand were denounced by their traditions as heretics.

Into this setting came Disciples' early evangelists; the premier of these men was Walter Scott. Scott discovered what he considered a "Divinely Authorized Plan for Preaching the Christian Religion." And to people who suffered under the weight of feeling there was little they could do about their eternal fate, he presented a simple analysis of conversion in the New Testament and isolated five steps which were open to all. They "all followed on hearing the Gospel preached, and all were open to any one who chose to act. They were Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Remission of Sins, and the Gift of Eternal Life." This formula, the gospel restored, became a 'five finger exercise' so that anyone could see and grasp it.²⁸ It became preached with the five points explicated as follows:

1. Faith - anyone who listens honestly to the facts about Jesus Christ can believe by accepting the evidence. God has acted to save sinners. No one needs to wait for a special miracle.

27 Ibid., p. 53.

28 Ibid.

2. Repentance - anyone who believes in Jesus Christ can in response to the gospel turn from sin to confess him as savior and Lord.
3. Baptism - the immersion of the penitent believe is a positive ordinance, an objective act open to any penitent believer.
4. Remission of Sins - God has promised forgiveness to all who offer themselves sincerely for Baptism. No other sign, no inward, emotional upheaval is necessary.
5. Gift of Eternal Life - God has promised the Holy Spirit and Life everlasting to all who by baptism accept his offer of forgiveness.²⁹

Though the 'five finger exercise' itself later became a form of legalism it is clear that through the nineteenth century it was "clearly a word of freedom. 'Who so ever will, may come' became a characteristic text." And that openness to individual assession to repentance remains a quality recognizable as central to the Disciple tradition.

The position of the preacher, then, and of the teacher, continue to hold prominence. The important thing was to make the gospel heard in its simple and unincumbered form and then to make sure that the simple plan of salvation was understood. While this plan was simple, and redemption and conversion needed no miraculous sign of grace, that should not imply that the depth of sin was any less great than that seen by the classical Protestant reformers. Campbell, no less, viewed humanity as lost in sin and in need of redemption in Christ. But the redemption that the evangelists preached was a full response to human need. "It frees from the guilt of sin, the power of sin and the state of sin. In offering deliverance from guilt, it released the Christian from the burden of a troubled conscience, putting to an end alienation from God and neighbor. In emancipating from the power of sin, it over-

29 Ibid., p. 54

comes love of evil and breaks the hold of negative habits." One can thus see the totality of the redemptive act. It delivers a new person and calls forth an inner change and redemption. This placed the firm priority on the initial conversion; seeing the discipline of this freed person as of little importance. E. V. Zollars speaks of this difference.

There are two ways to govern men: one is by outward restriction, and one is by inward principle...Before...true liberty is reached, inward principle must become the governing power. The law must be written on the heart. As long as law is external, man is a slave.³⁰

Because such redemption is internal and individual, Disciples, early, claimed freedom from creeds and confessions of faith. They saw the confessions which had grown out of Scholasticism as both unwarranted and unscriptural. If early Bishops were preoccupied with the formulation of the faith, Campbell and Stone fail to see any reason why. They believed that the Bible offered the formulation and that others were unnecessary. Barton Stone in his Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery notes:

We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book than having many to be cast into hell.³¹

So too, Campbell repudiated these creeds and confessions in his

Declaration and Address:

Though doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of divine truths and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors be highly expedient; and the more full and explicit they be for those

³⁰ Ibid., p. 58.

³¹ E. V. Zollars, The Commission Executed (Cincinnati: Standard, 1912) pp. 54-55, 62, 97.

purposes the better; yet as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning and of course must contain many interential truths, they ought not be made terms of Christian communion.³²

This affirmation came later to be represented in two slogans: "No book but the Bible" and "No Creed but Christ." While we may criticize the position of Campbell regarding the ordering of the church and the scripture, the focus on Christ as the center of Christian faith was "a formula which provided simultaneously power, authority, and freedom for the believer. It helped to overcome the cool rationalism with which some handled the scripture."³³ This focus gave emotional content to a Disciple' preaching which often tended to be less emotional than their Methodist counterparts. It provided a strong emotional attachment in the person of Jesus Christ and a common loyalty to that Lord. The focus "provided a basis of unity among believers while at the same time leaving them free of the demands for uniformity which Christians have so often imposed on one another."³⁴

The balance between those elements may have been lost in later years, leaving behind the emotional focus around the person of Jesus.

This developing sense of freedom was, along with the call for a church based on the "ancient order of things" and the commitment to unity of all Christians, a trinity of focus for the early church and its ministry. The combination of the three elements is in the Declaration and Address:

³² Declaration and Address and Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery (Indianapolis: International Convention of Disciples of Christ, 1949), p. 57.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Osborn, Experiment in Liberty, p. 56.

The favorable opportunity which Divine Providence has put into your hands in this happy country, for the accomplishment of so great a good, is a consideration of no small encouragement..... a country happily exempted from the baneful influence of a civil establishment of any particular form of Christianity...from under the influence of the anti-Christian hierarchy and at the same time, from any formal connection with the devoted nations that have given their strength and power unto the beast; in which of course no adequate formation can be accomplished until the word of God is fulfilled and the viles of his wrath poured out upon them...Can the Lord expect or require anything less from a people so liberally furnished with all means and mercies than a thorough reformation in all things civil and religious according to his word?³⁵

This trinity is stated more clearly and succinctly by the Disciple historian W. E. Garrison as he lays out "Why I Continue to be a Disciple:"

First, they hold to the teaching of the essentials of Christianity.

Second, they recognize the liberty of the Christian man and permit him great freedom in thought and practice.

Third, on the basis of a Christ centered faith and the utmost freedom in all controversial details, they plead for unity of Christians in one church....There is no other basis for a true and desirable unity.³⁶

This three part formula - unity, restoration, and liberty - continued to shape the thought of Disciples. And yet, that all three of these might be safeguarded (especially the freedom), they were institutionalized into 'mechanisms of freedom,' which took negative forms. These were anti-clericalism, anti-creedalism and anti-ecclesiasticalism.

By means of these mechanisms they undertook to secure liberty in the church. Each of these negative positions, moreover, became a powerful symbolic force in ethos of Disciples. To them all, clergy, creeds and church-courts were interrelated distortions in the Christianity of denominations. These aberrations inhibited freedom,³⁷ shattered unity and contravened the practice of the apostolic church.

35 Ibid.

36 Declaration and Address, p. 57.

37 Osborn, Experiment in Liberty, p. 89.

Although all of these mechanisms profoundly shaped the understanding of ministry, of course, few shaped it as directly as the spirited revolt against the clergy. This "anti-clericalism" was especially strong in Alexander Campbell's early years. He directed, in those years, attacks against the kingdom of the clergy and against hireling priests that he later could not recall. Though not unique in his criticism, Campbell's gift for colorful oratory and his access to the printed word as publisher earned him an ear as he heaped criticism upon the "guardians of orthodoxy" and upon the pretentiousness of the clergy.

As Smith reflects on the origins of this anti-clericalism, he sketches it as a unique blend of background influences of Campbell, both personal and intellectual, and of the American spirit.

But, says Lemmon, one should not assume that this attack developed out of a lack of respect for the ministry. Indeed, Lemmon suggests that he had a rather different understanding:

He had a fierce pride in his status as a minister of the gospel and was not reluctant to speak with ministerial authority and occasionally with arrogance. There is no question that he held his ministry in high regard. He believed that preachers should be qualified for their work in character and if possible in education and certainly in industry and that they should be carefully chosen.³⁸

So it is obvious that he held high regard for the faithful preacher; however, there is little doubt that the criticism he sowed led to a tradition that soon became fiercely anti-clerical.

This anti-clericalism was again attributed to the historical influences of the founding fathers and their struggles with "presumptuous clerics," but it stemmed from a rigid commitment to the

38 Ibid., p. 90.

immutable order of the ministry as it was devised by Campbell. The view was characteristic of all of the founding fathers of the movement, and their criticism provided a direction and momentum to the anti-clerical understanding which, once started, was difficult to stem. Richardson, in Campbell's Memoirs, describes this developing anti-clericalism:

So great, at this period was the antagonism between Mr. Campbell and the clergy that he was induced to animadvert with great severity upon their claims and their proceedings. Having entrenched himself in the position that "nothing was to be admitted as a matter of faith or duty for which there could not be produced a divine precept or Scripture precedent" he made from this impregnable fastness many a sharp foray into the territories over which the clergy had so long exercised almost undisputed sway. That caustic sarcasm and playful irony to which he was naturally disposed, but to which decorum forbade him to give utterance as a preacher, found expression through the pen of the editor and much of the earlier numbers of the paper were devoted to lively sketches of the working of the clerical machinery in the manufacture of the preachers; in the securing and enlarging of salaries; in the obtaining of high positions and of pompous titles, and in the extending of authority by means of "confederations in the form of general councils, assemblies, synods and conferences."³⁹

This kind of caustic criticism of "hireling" clergy and presumptuous clergy led to a suspicion and frequent attack of clergy by many lay persons within the tradition and made the development of a professional ministry difficult for Disciples. These early criticisms left their mark on Disciple polity and upon the view of clergy within the tradition.

³⁹ Clarence Lemmon, "An Evaluation of Our Ministry", Renewal of Church, I (1963), p. 200.

TYPES OF MINISTRY AND THE NATURE OF CALL

The marks of this anti-clericalism would center around two questions with which Disciples would struggle for the rest of the nineteenth century and which continue to create difficulties as Disciples today seek to understand the nature of ministry. These have centered largely around the issue of the relationship of the "ordained", set aside, professional ministry to the ministry of the rest of the community. This issue focused, then, as it developed around these two questions.

What does it mean to be called to ministry as one ordained or set apart?

What is the relationship of that person to the congregation and the Church universal? And, further, of it to him/her?

The first question, Campbell answers: "It is," say Catholics and Protestants, "the setting of a person apart to some holy ecclesiastic office....but is there not an agreement between the parties, a covenant made between the church and candidates for consecration, antecedent to ordination itself?"⁴⁰ As the thought of Campbell develops, what is clear is that he is not opposed to a ministry set apart from the rest of the community, but he is interested in the question of how they are called and ordained and with the understanding of how that call and ordination make the minister different from the rest of the community. It raises the question of nature of the religious leader and of his/her relationship to the community.

40 Ibid., pp. 200-01.

The argument of Campbell is with the notion that the call of such ministry was to a "person" in possession of specific inspiration and powers, who was set aside by mysterious knowledge. Campbell had seen this image too frequently abused, with clerics claiming power to oppress the laity based on that "set apart" nature. Such a conception ran counter to Campbell's understanding of equality and democracy and to his understanding of God's action in the world. And so he asserted:

"What the priest can do, any Christian can do if commissioned by the congregation, because all Christians are priests."⁴¹

This understanding assumes a division of types of religious leaders and religious communities. Ray Lindley has set this understanding within the context of the prophetic religious leader characterized by the deliberative group.⁴² He explores the history of religious groups through three types of religious leaders: the shaman, the priest and prophet, as described by George Coe. These types of leaders correspond to certain types of religious groups: respectively, that of the religious crowd, the sacerdotal system and the deliberative group. Coe sees these as historical evolution of the religious leader and religious action. He sees the shaman as characterized by mysterious powers of healing and miracles. They were the figures which we defined as the transcendent figure, with the function of being the "theotokos," the bearer of God. However, Coe fails to make the distinction earlier made that this person sought only to be a conveyor of God's power, not to

⁴¹ Millennial Harbinger (1835), p. 593.

⁴² Ray D. Lindley, "Types of Religious Leaders and the Churches Ministry," Renewal of the Church III (1963) p. 134.

control it for his own purposes. The group which is a counterpart to this type of religious leader is described as "excited, unreflective, and dependent on the shaman." The shaman holds the crowd together by virtue of "his ability to convince them he is in possession of mysterious powers denied ordinary man."⁴³

The second type of religious leader is the Priest who is the agent of the sacerdotal system. The type of religious action is held in the sacramental ritual and the power of the priest is found in his distribution of those sacraments. Their power was found in being the representative of that system.

The final type which is suggested is the prophetic leader, whose ministry again is that of being the bearer of God, but he does it in such a way that the question which guides him is "what is the divine will?" The group which is correlative is the deliberative group, which operates through a democratic process, choosing the minister.

As these three categories consider the question of call they suggest the following distinctions: the shamanistic ministry suggests one set aside by mysterious divine call, withheld from others, with the implication that they are in possession of exclusive divine knowledge. They are then called to that task by the Holy Spirit.

The priestly ministry is created by the sacerdotal system, to which they are called to be representatives, to conserve, by institutional means the values of the institution. Their call is from the ecclesiastical structure of the church. And the prophetic ministry is

43 Ibid., pp. 128-29.

functional, emerging out of the desires of the deliberative group decision. Their call comes from a contract between the people and the prophet, based on ability to perform the function with dedication.

There is little question which of these Campbell would prefer. Lindley says few things were more clear for Campbell than this question of "In what does the call exist?"

The call to the ministry consisted neither in a personal ambition on the part of the one called, a mandate from the holy spirit, nor a transmission of authority from a sacerdotal system, but in a social compact with the church. The office of ministry was in the nature of a social relationship and call, appointment and ordination were all integral to a social compact with the church.⁴⁴

Campbell is clear that it is the people who ordain, not the system nor the Holy Spirit.

Everything essential to appointment, call or ordination was vested in the minds of the brethren. Their desires, however, expressed, gave the office to the candidate, however, he was announced.....

Again, Campbell is influenced by his call to the ancient order of things:

No instance can be found in the inspired writings, where the circumstances are detailed, of the call and appointment of any brother to any office, where the call and appointment is not distinctly represented as the act of the brethren, and in no cases is an ordination or appointment made without them. But their call is what, in all cases, gives the right to officiate.⁴⁵

Nor is there any doubt how greatly this was effected by the influence of his understanding of "social contract theory" and covenantal theology:

Campbell based the validity of ordination on the idea of the covenant. W.E. Garrison has shown Campbell's indebtedness both to the Dutch Covenantal Theology and the social contract theory of government... The office receives its validity from the covenanted group and the authority of God is mediated through the voice of the people.⁴⁶

44 Lindley, p. 130.

45 Ibid., p. 145.

46 Ibid., pp. 145-46.

Thus, it is here that for Campbell the call exists, the social compact between the congregation and minister. The minister's call is not an office, but rather the work to be done. As such, the call was functional.

These functions to be served became then the only occasion of the social compact, and apart from such functions, no "call to ministry" existed:⁴⁷

The only call which any man could urge with either scripture or reason on his side was his competency to instruct, and the need for it. The same call which the rich man has to relieve the poor when he discovers them, is that which an intelligent Christian has to instruct those ignorant of God.⁴⁸

The nature of the call as functional will, we suggest, raise difficulties for the Disciple clergy as they seek to understand themselves and their relationship with the laity. As we will later discover, what this meant was that one's call existed only to the extent that one was sought by a congregation to perform a specific function. This question of function brings us to the second point, that is, what is the relationship of the function of the minister to the rest of the community? Campbell laid down those functions for the developing movement as we mentioned earlier. To recapitulate, they were:

Bishops, whose office it is to preside over, to instruct and to edify the community...Deacons. or servants--whether treasurers, almoners, stewards, doorkeepers, or messengers...and Evangelists ...sent out into the world (to preach, make converts and plant congregations).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Royal Humbert, (Ed.) A Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology (St. Louis: Bethany, 1961) p. 173.

⁴⁸ Lindley, p. 146.

⁴⁹ Millennial Harbinger (1831) p. 114.

Ken Teegarden, the General Minister and current President of Disciples, calls to our attention that "Campbell's list of offices did not include pastors."⁵⁰ It is with this division that much of the nineteenth century Disciple ministry was occupied. That function was, in Campbell's Christian system, to be occupied by the elder, whose function as the Bishop of the church (and this ought not be considered a single person; there were always to be two) was to teach, administer the Lord's supper and care for the church. The evangelists, who were the so-called professional, educated, full-time clergy, were to do the preaching. However, as congregations began to be more settled, more and more began to desire the services of a full-time "minister" or pastor. As this began to be more frequent, great clashes began between the "lay elders" and the "ordained evangelists." The debate over the located pastor, provided the opportunity for the functional definition of calling and the anti-clerical spirit to intensify during this time. The opposition to this located pastor was held firmly by some:

There is no such function or position in the church as that of a pastorate to be filled by a special class of men different from the elders..Now in view of the truth as here stated we cannot but feel alarmed at the disposition which is clearly on the increase, to create a new office in the church and to fill it with a class of men wholly unknown to the Bible.⁵¹

By 1870 this line of distinction between "bishops" and "evangelists" had become very thin. That confusion is lifted by Isaac Errett in 1869:

50 Campbell, Christian System, p. 84.

51 Kenneth L. Teegarden, We Call Ourselves Disciples (St.Louis: Bethany, 1975) p. 76.

I have had the experience of over a quarter of a century as a preacher, pastor and evangelist; but I have never been right sure in what relation I was regarded by the churches I tried to serve. I have usually regarded myself as a pastor when settled in a congregation; but I have often felt that most of the so-called elders looked upon me with suspicion as an Elder rather than a pastor.⁵²

Osborn notes that this struggle between the elder and the minister continued "into the early decades of this century...but the ministers won by persuading the congregations to adopt the principle of stated terms, with rotation for service by elders and deacons...Most Disciples now speak of eldership as a lay office rather than an office of ministry."⁵³ This struggle left two scars that continue to cause difficulties. First, the nature of the call, as functional and only as sought by the congregation, often gave rise to the minister as "hired servant" who was called only to the extent that the congregation was pleased with his function. To the difficulties this raises for clergy functioning I will later return. The second problem was the continuing vestiges of "anti-clericalism" which are encouraged by the struggle between the elder and minister. Though that struggle is no longer present, there still arises on the part of some lay persons that image of the elder as the "hound dog of Christ." And, though it now strikes us as humorous, the image continues to exist in differing forms when the questions of authority and responsibility are as confused as they remain today.

Finally, we must address the focus of the ministry on the "sacramental word" as it developed throughout the nineteenth century for

⁵² Lard Moses, "Work of the Past-Symptoms of Future," Lard's Quarterly (1863), p. 15.

⁵³ Isaac Errett, "Editorial", Christian Standard (May 8, 1869) p. 146.

Disciples. Osborn suggests that throughout the first half of the nineteenth century:

"the notion of returning to primitive simplicity was the self-evident way to freedom and virtue. Alexander Campbell simply applied the prevailing mindset to the life of the church when he began to contend for the original faith and order in opposition to all the **corruptions** of fifteen centuries left as stumbling blocks--the "rubbish of ages" so that Christians could advance unhampered by the restraints of autocracy and superstition. Thus, it also opened a freeway to unity, rid of obstructions of old sectarianism."⁵⁴

And yet, as we have suggested this assumption that one could somehow get beyond history, was itself historically shaped. Disciples, like the Hebrew scribes of the Post-exilic period, began to make that liberating word a source of legalism itself, creating a barrier to union and liberty. "The ancient order of things became an end in itself. Restoration became a principle of division, with liberty on this issue (immersion of believers as only form of baptism), severely curtailed."⁵⁵ So too, for the ministry of the church as for the Hebrew scribes, the focus became the "legalism of the book," a position which by the middle period saw "restoration a self-evident value, elevated to a position of dominance and a Disciple legalism of the Book fashioned an 'iron bedstead'--a true irony of history, not a creedalism but a 'Bibleism'."⁵⁶

The irony, then, of the early Disciple development was the embodiment of that which they had sought to escape, that is, a legalism which narrowed the original vividness of the Christian faith. The ministry of the church, whether elder or evangelist, had to struggle

⁵⁴ Osborn, Experiment in Liberty, p. 92.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

increasingly to escape the legalism of the formulation that the gospel might be taught and preached. And, with the emphasis of that function and the depletion of the focus on the "person" of the clergy as distinct, the minister did become more functionary of the word. And as the Hebrew leadership separated the functions of ministry between different persons, so, too, the Disciple leadership was separated in its beginnings into functional compartments. This narrowed the understanding of ministry. Throughout the nineteenth century that "narrowing" always focused its priority on preaching and teaching the word, often to the exclusion of the work of pastoral care.

We have followed the outline of Holmes as he traced the image of the sacramental person, the one who sought to embody Christ in the community. Holmes has tried to show throughout that the final function of ministry is personal, as was Christ's. He speaks:

I believe that it is in the history of persons and their lives within the chosen community of Israel and in the broader community of mankind that we meet God as personal. Ultimately its supreme expression is in the person of Christ, his life, death and resurrection. Here we perceive the promise of the fulfillment of our personhood. As Christ's ministry was that of his person, so the ministry of the Ursakrament, the church is of the person. that is the essence of Christian ministry that individual who embodies in his person the Church's vocation. That is what I have called the sacramental person...it is from this that ministerial function derives itself... There is no doubt that the Church has in one way or another attempted to focus its ministry in the sacramental person.....it would seem that from the third century on the Church has been less than successful in that objective. Some of the problems in ministry that we have recognized in successive centuries seem to be rooted in this depersonalization of ministry and the adoption of more and more mechanical models...⁵⁷

57 Ibid.

It is this depersonalization that has occurred in the Disciples' conception of ministry (and most Protestant traditions) that must be addressed as we struggle to discover a contemporary image of ministry. There is little doubt that Disciple clergy have, throughout the years, discovered that the ultimate nature of ministry lay not in their functions but in their person. Struggling against a history which intended to deplete the understanding of ministry as embodied in office, the clergy of our history have frequently had to struggle against the barriers of these influences. As William Martin Smith remarks:

Really the remarkable thing is that they accomplished so much against the handicaps of lack of esteem, lack of support, lack of education, lack of encouragement, as well as lack of mutual concern.⁵⁸

The ones who have been able to serve most faithfully are the ones, we contend, who were able to distinguish between the abuses of the office and the call to personal embodiment. Again, our General Minister and President has lifted this quality of "Faithfulness to Christ's Ministry:"

Particularly in the Christian Church, which relies on voluntary relationships, there is little awe for any ministerial office. It is not the office to which people respond. It is the quality of servanthood of the person who holds it. It is the kind of life the minister lives..."the visible rhetoric." "What he is as a man is more important than anything he does or says in the course of his ministrations."⁵⁹

As these ministers of the Word sought to minister faithfully, it was in the one who attempted to become the "Word made Flesh" that the sacramental person was maintained. And while many were caught up in the legalism of a rigid word, placing the incarnation of Christ in

58 Smith, p. 60.

59 Teegarden, pp. 81-82.

the New Testament and then in the "restoration of that order," others were busy seeking to discover that birth in their lives and ministry.

This heritage with both sides has lived on in the form of confusion regarding the nature of Disciple clergy among the mutual ministry in contemporary order of ministry. And, many of the vestiges of that history of functional call and anti-clericalism have created problems that continue to present obstacles to the transcendent person in ministry among the Disciples. These are integrally related to some of the forces which Holmes lifts that are contributing to a confusion regarding the nature of ministry in the contemporary society and the low morale among clergy. It is to this discussion that the next chapter will turn. And in Chapter 5 we will explore some suggestions for restoring the more personal, transcendent nature of ministry.

CHAPTER 4

WHERE HAS THE GLORY GONE?

ASSESSING THE LOSS OF ESTEEM AND LACK OF IDENTITY OF MINISTRY

The questions which I addressed in a more confessional and personal way in the preface come to a clearer exploration in this chapter. "What has happened to the image of the minister?" "Where has this lack of esteem, both self and public esteem come from?" "To what do we attribute the lack of clarity regarding ministerial function and office?" "Who is the person of the minister in the tradition of a community of priests?" "Why do we have so many men and women leaving the ministry?" All of these questions address the radical shift which both the church and her ministry have undergone in the past seventy-five years.

William Martin Smith addressed this problem some fourteen years ago as he spoke of the need to confront a changing world:

We have no other choice as I see it, but to confront the conditions of our time. The first of these conditions is that both the church and the ministry have lost esteem. We should have known this was coming, because no persecution is as subtle or deadly, as public acceptance and personal denial. This is the experience of the ministry in the past few decades. The easiest way to dismiss the relevancy of the church and the gospel is to insist that every public gathering be opened with prayer by a clergyman, but deny him the right to speak upon any issue.

T. J. Mullen observes:

There is today a growing attitude of anti-clericalism in America... There may have been a time when the typical pastor was a symbol of deep dedication, self-sacrifice and hard working humility.¹ However, that image is held by fewer people today than in the past.

¹ William Martin Smith, Servants Without Hire (Nashville: D.O.C. Historical Society, 1978) p. 75.

Eugene Boring has described this current status by saying it is something like that mournful word of the Old Testament, "Ichabod" which means "the glory has departed." He observes:

The last century it was a matter of some "glory" to be a minister. To read the life of Thomas Campbell, for instance, is to behold a man....whose moving to another community was felt to be a public loss...Not so long ago Raymond Calkins could write a book called Romance of the Ministry, and Edgar DeWitt Jones could entitle his history of the Yale Lectures on Preaching, The Royalty of the Pulpit.

Parents held up the ministry to their children as among the most noble of vocations...Today? Well, "the parson" is a cartoon figure from the past. A book entitled Romance of the Ministry is likely to be taken as a story about a cleric and his secretary. Though the greatness of the men of the Yale Lectures and of their historian is not to be denied, that was another time and in our day we find it difficult to get royalty and pulpit into the same phrase... And parents tremble at the possibility that their son might turn down the engineering scholarship to go to seminary.²

"Holmes cites a Gallup study suggesting that in 1967 only eight percent of the population recommended the role of clergyman as the preferred profession, far behind that of the doctor, engineer, professor-teacher, and on a par with lawyer, business executive and a government career."³ He also cites several studies that show the numbers of ministers leaving the parish as increasing.

To what can these shifts in the ministerial esteem and lessening in ministerial morale be attributed? Holmes lists four reasons for this shift. I will consider the questions raised for the Disciple's polity and ministry within those four categories.

² M. E. Boring, "Ichabod...the Glory has Departed," Christian (October 8, 1967) p. 1286.

³ Urban T. Holmes, III, The Future Shape of Ministry (New York: Seabury, 1971) p. 139.

SHIFT FROM MINISTER OF THE WORD

First, he suggests, there has been a shift from one or two clearly defined ideas of what it is to be a clergyman, depending on whether the emphasis is Catholic or Protestant---the representative of the authority of God's Church or the preacher of the Word-- to a different and poorly defined role. This new role is generally perceived to be the "physician of the soul", pastoral director, or most frequently, some sort of pastoral counselor. Niebuhr has described the current confusion regarding the pastoral role; in the preceding chapter. This confusion has had to do with this shift from the preaching function as the primary focus of ministry to a function broadly defined by pastoral care. Raymond Cunningham's article, earlier referred to, traces this shift as it occurred in America in the nineteenth century. It seems the Disciples are not the only Protestants to struggle with the pastor-preacher dilemma. That struggle was more broadly representative of the growing struggle between the pastor's role in conversion of souls and that of caring for souls after conversion. Though he suggests the conflict continued throughout the nineteenth century with preaching continuing to be seen as the primary focus, the "raison d'etre" for ministry, there was a struggle beginning which would emerge fully in the next century. The following remarks by Albert J. Lyman, a Congregational pastor in 1909 show the ambiguity for the minister, as this dilemma began to emerge more fully, when he refers to a colleague.

Dr. Stalker...expressed the Protestant consensus as to the place of preaching in the ministerial vocation, when he exclaimed "Preaching is the central thing in our work." Yet, later on in the same lectures, he remarked, "Gentlemen, I believe that almost any preacher on reviewing a ministry of any considerable duration, would have to confess that his greatest mistake had been the neglect of individuals."

Lyman himself posed the question, "Are these two mutually exclusive or is there not a conception of the pastor in the pulpit which may unite them?"

The need which Lyman and others discovered was the frequent neglect of individual pastoral ministry. And it was to that task that ministry was called in the twentieth century. But such a shift was not easy, and brought with it much confusion. Many clergy and their understanding of the Christian faith were like the Disciples, more simply and clearly articulated in terms of the method of salvation and redemption. Scott's five-finger exercise for salvation outlined the steps necessary for the Christian to be saved. The functions of the ministry were clearly defined as well, with the professional clergy largely the evangelists, and the bishops the teachers. Even as the "one man, settled pastor" began to emerge the tasks of ministry were still defined largely in terms of a ministry of the Word.

The difficulty is that the focus on the ministry of the Word and indeed of the Word itself, became rigidified. As had the scribes of post-exilic Judaism before them, so now had Disciples developed a new legalism, a Biblicism, based on the "ancient order of things." Its error was the same as that of the scribes; it trapped the Holy Spirit and the work of God in the past. This made the ministry and the people of the church protectorates of an ancient God rather than persons who were alive with the spirit of the New Testament which they so revered.

The task for the ministry and the church was to discover again the God of history as the God acting in the present in a new way in our changing world. Their task was the task which the Conference on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches meeting in Geneva in 1973 set forth for churches in the contemporary era.

The church is the people of God in History. It is a part of the world to which it is sent. As human society changes, the Church is called to seek a new obedience to God in the new situation. For instance, if in a society new means of communication are developed, they will have their effect upon the ministry of the Word. For example, if in a society there is a great movement of population from the countryside to city, a church whose structures are wholly adapted to a rural situation is challenged to change them. Such a manifestation is required in order that the church may do in the world what it exists to do: which is by the power of Christ, to proclaim and show in its own life the breaking in of the Kingdom.⁴

A changing ministry in a changing world has always been a criteria by which the effectiveness of the ministry could be measured, and it is no less so today. And, yet, the change of which we speak is one which must get hold of the old task of bearing God to the people in a way that they will be provided with a new worldview and a new sense of the active nature of God in their lives. As we have suggested through the thought of Nouwen and Lifton, people in our society are suffering by being cut lose from many of these easy answers as well. They are characterized by historical dislocation, fragmented ideology and a search for immortality. The twentieth century has shaken up the chemistry of humanity's world in such a way that old patterns and forms bear little meaning.

⁴ Faith and Order Commission (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1973) p. 53.

Holmes has suggested that this kind of a change has created a need for readjustment of the church and the clergy.

Our claim is that the twentieth century is, at the least, as crucial a time for readjustment of man's perception of his world, his sense of what is real as was the first, the fourth and the sixteenth (with an acknowledgement of the twelfth). The implication that follows from this claim is that ministry must change its pattern today to fulfill its God-given vocation in this new world, as it did three times previously. I hasten to add that it has changed in accordance with the principle of an effective incarnation of the transcendent for our times.⁵

Holmes characterizes this shift in a way that runs closely parallel to Lifton's. He sees a loss of allegiance to any inherent universal coherence, a shift in theory of knowledge from a Cartesian theory of knowledge to a more participatory and intuitive theory, a renewed sense of freedom and the future which calls our attention to a future with radical limits, and the impact of technology. These have all contributed to a shift from the modern era, to our contemporary era that has frequently caught ministers still in the former and has contributed to this loss of esteem and identity confusion. Walker comments on this rapid change.

It is probably that no other centuries old vocation is undergoing such rapid and unpredictable change as is the pastoral ministry. Books dealing with the changing roles of ministry come now with regularity from the press. Along with these changes, real and anticipated, and indeed stimulating them, is the conviction on the part of many that the church itself must undergo radical transformation if it is to be relevant to the times in which it now exists.⁶

Clergy in the contemporary era have then discovered themselves caught by two difficulties. On the one hand, they were confronted by a

⁵ Holmes, p. 105.

⁶ Grandville T. Walker, "On the Pastoral Ministry," in his Four Faces of Ministry (St. Louis: Bethany, 1973) p. 17.

changing world which called for a vastly changed ministry and on the other hand, they were largely at a loss as to how to move from what had been a clearly articulated role to a vague new task. Faced with the gap between their understanding of their role and the needs of their congregations, ministers sought to fill that gap with skills and functions which would be respected and which were needed.

The role which was taken up by an increasing number of clergy was that of the "pastoral director" or "pastoral counselor". Such a need had grown out of the neglect of individual care of souls by many nineteenth century clergy. Further, the insights of psychology had given new insights to the care of souls which had given it a place of increasing importance in the secular world. By the decades of the sixties and seventies, others developed skills as "social workers" and change agents in the structures of society. All of these were tasks which, after all, responded to the needs of the world and answered charges of irrelevancy directed to clergy. That irrelevancy and the confusion of roles in general should not be taken lightly. A study among ex-U.C.C. pastors suggests that this confusion and the feelings surrounding it may have been a reason for increasing drop-outs from the ministry. When asked why they "left the ministry", the number one response among these ex-ministers was "the sense of personal and professional inadequacy."⁷

The dilemma for clergy caught up in such role confusion and increasing sense of professional inadequacy is "What do I do to make

7 Holmes, p. 144.

myself important?" That search often led clergy to settle for ways of being useful. That dilemma has led many to feel like a clergyman in a recent advertisement. The picture shows the minister perched on top of a ladder reaching to paint the top gable of the church, commenting: "This isn't what I had in mind when I said I wanted to go into a higher calling." It has led many clergypersons to confuse servanthood with a need to be important that manifests itself in a ministry characterized by the following true story which Holmes relays.

The rector, who had a "late vocation" had previously served as a male nurse, offered the following service in a newsletter.

This month of October has been designated Diabetes Detection Month and the Rector, himself a diabetic, offers this service to anyone who desires it. Just follow this procedure:

1. Collect a specimen of urine in a clean bottle and attach your name firmly by tape to the bottle.
2. Bring me the specimen and I will run the sugar test and report to you what I find.

If the specimen is negative you have nothing to worry about, but if it turns out positive you would do well to consult your doctor without delay. Diabetes is an insidious disease and can cause very serious trouble if it is present and undetected. So do not take a chance--the test will cost you nothing and I will be happy to be of service.⁸

Though humorous, the story suggests the struggle to discover ways to fulfill one's ministry in a time when the confusion of a changing world has called for a changing ministry. Thus, has the shift from the clearly defined ministry of the Word of preaching to the more vague images of pastoral care been a primary factor in the lagging morale of ministry and loss of esteem.

8 Ibid.

LIMITATIONS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The second thing which has contributed, says Holmes, to this fading pastoral image and loss of esteem involves the nature of our ministerial education. The fundamental failure is addressed by Owen Thomas, professor of Theology at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "The fundamental source of it (the dichotomy between traditional and practical disciplines) is the failure on both sides to face the basic question about what the church and its members should do and be today. The traditional disciplines often do not get to this question and the practical disciplines assume that it has been answered."⁹ My own experience has led me to discover the truth of this comment. Though I was more fortunate to be part of a program which in some ways sought to involve the seminary and church in dialogue,¹⁰ there was still lacking discussion of the more basic nature of pastoral theology. There were assumed pastoral roles inherent in these involvements. The interaction of the traditional and practical disciplines were involved in discussing the nature of the role prescribed, but seldom in consideration of the adequacy of the role or in dialogue about new roles of ministry.

I would suggest that what has happened for clergy in the loss of esteem and the gap between the modern and contemporary roles has been

⁹ Owen C. Thomas, "Some Issues in Theological Education," Theological Education, (1968) p. 349.

¹⁰ I was fortunate enough to be an intern in Project Burning Bush. This was a three year project at School of Theology at Claremont which sought to involve students and churches in dialogue and exploration of a dual theme: Expanding global consciousness and deepening spirituality. It involved ten students in contextual education at various churches.

true for the seminary as well. Most frequently, seminaries have been caught up by one of two responses. One response was to re-gear the old image of the "minister of the word" and re-trench, ignore the change. The other response was to fill in the role of clergy with the contemporary "helping-professions skills," assuming these to be needed by the pastoral director. At a time when there was increasing hunger in the American society for "spiritual guidance", there were few seminaries who placed a priority on the spiritual development of their ministerial candidates. These, as well as other factors, lead to an increase in the number of ministers who entered the parish having either outmoded understandings of the role of ministers or confused roles.

LAGGING CLERGY SUPPORT SYSTEMS

"A third area that has a causal relationship to the image and morale of clergyman is the support system within the ministry. What happens to the pastor, equipped with a vaguely defined job description, trained in a poorly integrated system, once he finds himself functioning as minister?"¹¹ The entire area of ministerial support is a crucial one for Disciples, arising out of their tradition which railed against "hireling priests" and continued suspicions of clerics into this century. The question of monetary and congregational support of the minister has been, for Disciples, a point of struggle and contributed greatly to the sense of inadequacy and low morale among its ministers. Holmes addresses this question in several areas.

¹¹ Holmes, p. 89.

The first thing which the young minister will discover, says Holmes, is that all the ministerial function rests on him. This is no less true for traditions such as Disciples, U.C.C. and others which have celebrated their emphasis on priesthood of all believers. One author of a recent study of U.C.C. ministry has suggested that there has developed a gap between authority and responsibility. As this has developed for Disciples it has meant that usually the authority for the ministry of the church is shared between the minister and the elders, deacons, and board members, with the final authority for most decisions residing with the lay leaders. But, in the contemporary era, the emphasis on specialization by education, professionalism and the day to day crunch to get things done, has left the minister as the one responsible for implementing the ministry and mission of the church, even that for which he has little or no authority.

This problem developed historically for Disciples with the shift of the presbyterial function from the elder to the minister. So that Disciples now, like other denominations, assume "that ministerial function and the role of the presbyter/pastor are almost entirely congruent."¹² For Disciples the struggle between the professional clergy and the located elder in the church led to a clash over responsibility for the church. With the abdication, what developed was a confused solution, with the clergy assuming most of the responsibilities, but the elders and the laity assuming most of the authority. In our century there has developed, with the rise of professionalism, even more of an emphasis on the ordained person as a "one man or one woman

12 Ibid.

show." Wayne Bryant has spoken to this difficulty in a recent study:

Despite the emphasis upon the "laos", the "whole people of God" and the "priesthood of all believers", the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has developed a professional ministry similar to other religious groups in function, if not in its concept of "calling". The tragedy has been that with the emergence of the professional ministry, we have fallen into a "one-man" concept of ministry and as a consequence, the other officers of the church, i.e., the elders, have frequently lost their understanding of themselves as "overseers" of the various congregational functions, leaving the professional minister all alone as the one person bearing the responsibility for the spiritual life of the congregation, and that is an "absolutely untenable position," whenever it occurs, leading to tension and dissatisfactions.¹³

Bryant suggests that the functional definition with which Disciple clergy have understood themselves has added to the nature of this frustration. This is the question which is addressed more directly by the second issue of clergy support, that the role of the pastor is carried out primarily in the congregational setting. For Disciples that has a particular historical dilemma for ministers since the call is attached to the congregational function. In an unpublished paper delivered to the Commission of Theology and Christian Unity in 1974, John Thompson commented on this dilemma:

The functional view of the ministry defines the minister primarily by the tasks he performs. He is what he does...Ordination is little more than a starter's gun sending a young clergyman running about his chores. He is regarded by the church as a specially trained layman. From such a functional conception it is not far to the place where the congregation begins to regard the clergyman as its "hired man".¹⁴

¹³ Wayne Bryant, "A Study of the Church/Minister Relationship in Periods of Declining Membership" (Doctoral Dissertation, San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1977) p. 2.

¹⁴ John Thompson, "The Ministry: Order, Ordination, Mutual Ministry" (paper delivered to the Commission on Theology & Christian Unity, Berea, Kentucky, November 14-15, 1964) p. 9.

This has meant that clergy have had to understand their call as based on their function within a congregation. Though more recently Disciples have sought to develop polity changes which respond to this problem "theologically" and suggest the importance of support, several difficulties continue to exist for the minister at realistic local levels.

While Disciples have frequently understood themselves as characteristic of a ministry whose image was that of the prophet in the deliberative group, responding to the will of God for the congregation, the reality of a call based on the ability to perform the functions which the congregation sought, has provided a ministry which was more political than prophetic. In their recent study on Ministry in America Strommen et al, have found that Disciples more than other denominations are characterized by a view of clergy that values their political ability. That ability is the ability to be able to keep those in his or her congregation pleased with what is happening. He or she is, because of the total dependence on the congregation for his or her call, particularly vulnerable to grass roots opinion. The test of his or her success as a minister is based primarily upon whether or not he/she can keep the congregation vital and in tact. This has necessarily placed the minister in the position of being political and characterized by the role definition of the congregation rather than his or her own.

The emphasis of Bryant's study was the consideration of the dilemma of the minister in a declining member church. He suggests that the effect of using the past evangelistic successes of Post World War II as criteria against which to judge the success or failure of present

ministry has been a particular area of stress between clergy and laity and has led to a great deal of low self-esteem and inadequacy among clergy.¹⁵ This dilemma created a tension which he suggests was of great consequence. It resulted for several ministers leaving the ministry and leaving active participation in the church. The question that is raised is one of the freedom of the clergy to discern a call which is not totally dependent upon this political nature.

In a tradition which has been so concerned to preserve the freedoms of those involved as the community of faith against the abuses of the clergy, the question must now be asked, suggests Ron Osborn, "How shall the freedom of the ministry be safeguarded among Disciples?"¹⁶ He responds:

Disciples no longer hurl about the anticlerical cliches in which they once delighted. They have accepted an order of ministry, even a professional clergy, and they perceive it as no threat to their freedom--perhaps because in a showdown the congregation holds all the chips. They have reaped the benefits but they have not yet secured the liberty of their ministers. This is a far more serious situation than the mere violation of those rights and privileges of the employee...To whatever extent any part of the church restricts the full freedom of a person appointed to minister to the gospel of God, it hampers the whole church in fulfilling its vocation. Whenever a minister loses a position by the unilateral action of one congregation or institution, the entire body participates both in the guilt of any injustice done to the one ordained in its name and in the loss, temporary, or permanent of the service from one whom it has nurtured, educated and brought to usefulness. Disciples can no longer afford this irresponsibility which lingers as a vestige of anti-clericalism.¹⁷

This lack of freedom has frequently meant that Disciples clergy have not had the freedom to be able to be prophetic or to be able to live out the

¹⁵ Bryant, Chapter 4, pp. 46-59.

¹⁶ Ronald Osborn, Experiment in Liberty (St. Louis: Bethany, 1978) p. 93.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 93-94.

gospel of Christ, in a way which would call forth the 'anti-structural' image of the transcendent-liminal servant. They have had to risk responding to the integrity of their call, the possibility of the loss of their congregational call.

The statement of the Conference of Faith and Order as it addresses this issue has, then, special importance for the minister who finds himself with questions of support as suggested above. They provide:

An essential element of the renewal of the Church is the renewal of the ministry. Any doctrine of ministry conveys the image of the role which the minister has to fulfill in the Christian community. As he accepts the ministry he approaches the congregation with his own understanding of his task. He will soon discover, however, that the actual expectations of the Christian community differ from his own. He needs to take these expectations into account.

Ministers experiencing such tension face a difficult dilemma. Either they adhere to their vision of the ordained ministry or they adjust to the role they actually expected to play and experience feelings of guilt.¹⁸

This issue is one which will require on the part of the congregation and the minister a different ordering of how the ministry of the church is decided. On the part of the congregation and the denomination at large it will require a larger understanding and support of the call of the individual to "ordained ministry." For the minister this will require an understanding of call that is based on something beyond a functional definition. It will, we will argue, depend on the restoration of the symbolic nature of the transcendent image of the sacramental person as central to his or her call.

¹⁸ Faith & Order Commission, p. 49.

A further complication of this question involves the pastor's support network of significant others. Unlike Catholic clergy who rely upon their order and fellow priests in the manse for support, most Protestant clergy are separated from their hierarchy of support and indeed, for some, no such hierarchy exists. For most Protestant clergy, the significant others are usually family and closest friends who are usually within the parish. The dependence upon this group within the church for his support again catches the minister in a bind. As Holmes notes: "Frequently the maintenance of his integrity demands of him (and I would add his family) alienation from this group (friends in parish). He must pay the price of loneliness and depression."¹⁹

The Policies and Procedures for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Pacific Southwest Region recognizes that "By ordination the Church covenants to undergird this ministry."²⁰ Such a statement recognizes the importance of support at the regional level. And yet, it will take a greater realistic level of support to change the lack of support which is currently present in our denomination. It raises questions of polity, ministerial authority and the relationship between the clergy and the congregation to which we shall return later.

The third issue of clergy support deals with the area of inadequate education which we have already addressed in a specific way. "Most often, the pastor has not clarified his theology and self-image to

¹⁹ Holmes, p. 150.

²⁰ Policies & Procedures for Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (DOC) in Pacific Southwest Region.

the point where issues can be defined between himself and the parish and he becomes a function of his congregation."²¹ Again, the particular danger of this problem within the configuration of the Disciple tradition is clear. The very nature of the Disciple understanding of call assumes that it is the congregation which determines the function of the minister. We will argue, the problem is not only the fault of the laity, but as Holmes states, of the minister who comes into the congregation with an understanding of his theology and himself that are unclear. The issue with which we will be dealing throughout the rest of the paper will revolve around this consideration of the nature of the minister in the community.

The particular difficulty in dealing with this question in the contemporary period is that there is a loss for many clergy of a separate image. The stress has been to suggest that we are "just like everyone else". Confronted with a loss of esteem, and indeed criticisms of being irrelevant, the clergy person has frequently sought to regain esteem by being a professional like everyone else. The reality of this perception was brought home to me my first year in seminary when I was confronted in a bar by a graduate student in physics who challenged "Don't you think that being a minister in the current age is a bit of an anachronism?" That critique did more to undercut the image of myself as a priest than most experiences which I have faced. And yet, when we have faced such statements during our century, we have generally bought into the criticism and sought to recover our esteem by being like everyone else. Again, we will suggest later that this response has, in fact,

21 Holmes, p. 150.

undercut the nature and vitality of the priesthood in our time.

We must not be unsensitive to the plight of clergy in the contemporary age. Being cut loose in a congregation with few suggestions about where to go and less understanding of who they are, they discover a need to be needed and are fearful of risking that community. As I talked with a group of clergy about the thoughts in this study, I was taken back by one member of the group who protested to the image of the minister as the sacramental person, the bearer of Christ. "I don't want to be different, everyone else is just like me. I am simply the representative of the church." He had had the experience of persons discovering in him a power of Christ beyond and did not want to be seen in that kind of a situation. "When you are seen as the bearer of Christ you get used up." I wish I had been able to say, "Yes, you are right, that is what it means to bear Christ, to lose our life, to give it away so that it often appears to us and to others that we will be used up." But I didn't and perhaps it is just as well, for inherent in the argument of my friend was the fear of one on whom the whole responsibility of ministry had frequently been dropped, one who had probably suffered as much from the general loss of esteem toward clergy as most, and for whom the model of the minister as the enabler of other ministries was his mode of operating. Yet we are suggesting that it is precisely in this image of vulnerability and in daring to be different that the restoration of the "glory and esteem" of the priesthood are to be found.

The final comment regarding support raises the question of a leadership vacuum.

"At the risk of seeming uncharitable, it has to be said that advancement in most denominations goes to men who are "safe" and statistically successful. There are notable exceptions, but for the majority, conformity comes before creativity, expediency before imagination and fear before thought."²²

This question again raises the conflict between the minister's image of himself or herself and that of the congregation or larger areas of support. What Holmes is suggesting here is related to Bryant's earlier comment that the use of such criteria, of "statistical" success leads to an inadequate ministry and low self-image among clergy. Here the suggestion is that few clergy risk being creative, imaginative or confrontive for fear that they will not be advanced. To the extent we have bought into this political mode, we are liable to Segundo's critique of pastoral prudence which suggests the emphasis on creating no more tension or change than can be had to keep the maximum number of people. Such a position leaves the church without leadership and the minister in violation of the integrity of his or her call.

Again, Bryant's study of Disciple clergy have shown that while persons may not like the abuses of ministry, they do want a pastor to be a leader. So, too, did Strommen's group discover a similar desire for strong leadership. These studies found that one of the most important characteristics was the ability of the minister to have integrity in his/her job, maintaining a stance as leader consistent with that integrity. In fact, in Strommen's study Disciples rank as more sensitive to the need for the pastor's leadership than many other more authoritarian structures. However, they do see the minister as

22 Ibid., p. 154.

one who shares leadership and is good at working with groups. The A.T.S. report on "Readiness for Ministry" speaks of the necessity of leadership and the kind of leadership of which we are speaking:

...skill in community building, a theological understanding of conflict and the ability to utilize conflict to achieve positive outcomes. Included also is the ability of a minister to share congregational leadership by finding and employing lay leaders in significant roles. Another deals with efficient administration by focusing on how one handles administrative responsibilities. It is an approach characterized by careful planning as well as efficiency.²³

As the report continues it speaks of the kind of leadership which we have suggested is essential:

Reflected also is a desire of laity and professionals for ministers who clearly affirm and live the gospel they have been called to proclaim. They want to share their ministry with clergy who both know God and acknowledge their human limitations. Though an initial examination may suggest that a superhuman is desired as minister-priest, a closer look shows something quite different. God's people are not looking for some small God or one who must pretend to be perfect. Rather they are looking for one who is able to face all human limitations and yet be the vehicle of God's witness and service in the world of need. It is clear that ministry lies at the center of peoples' expectations. It is not intellect or any given skill that people are looking for in ministers. Rather it is the integration of a good mind, counseling skills, preaching ability and all the rest they want, incarnate in a person who seeks to minister to them as persons.²⁴

It is this kind of minister-priest which we have been suggesting by the phrase sacramental person and which we will address more directly in the next chapter. He or she is the minister who seeks to incarnate the presence of God among his or her people as one among them, calling them to enter into God's presence, not because the minister is God, but

²³ Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, American Piety (Berkeley: University of California, 1968) p. 63.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 210.

because he or she bears God in a way which calls forth the God-relationship in all of us. It is a ministry of service but one which is different than a service which is giving, seeking to be important in return, or is turned from its roots into philanthropy.

CONFUSION IN THEOLOGICAL CONVICTION AND DEVOTIONAL LIFE

The final causal element in the loss of esteem and morale among clergy is the confusion in theological conviction and devotional commitment. These relate to the overall theological confusion about which we have spoken. Holmes' comment here is that while there is a justifiable abandonment of the notions held in these areas in previous centuries, there is a "regrettable failure to retain the core of truth in both these disciplines."²⁵ The convictions of Disciples' early founders and even into this century were more clear and more firmly held than in our time. These theological positions did, especially for the early clergy, provide a clearly spelled out agreement upon which the clergyperson could operate. The twentieth century has, as we have suggested, undermined many of the assumptions upon which those positions rested, leaving confusion for today's clergy and laity.

Stark and Glock have made an interesting study of the shift from orthodoxy regarding the Christian's myths and beliefs in the contemporary era. They found that "the overwhelming proportion of Americans today do not adhere to pristine orthodoxy."²⁶ Less than a third surveyed believed in these three positions: that there was a life

²⁵ Holmes, p. 155.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 156.

after death, that Jesus was born of a virgin, and that Jesus walked on water. These are they suggest a measure of total commitment to orthodoxy. The ministry of the word as it was found among Disciples in earlier decades would have found a congregation few of whom would have questioned such positions. Nor would the clergy question these assumptions.

Yet, Holmes argues that what has happened is that many have lost their commitment to these beliefs and that instead of reformulating their beliefs into new theological positions in such a way that we, once more, might have a common base for ministry, they are "tossed by the waves and whirled about by every fresh gust of teaching," (Eph. 4:14). With the loss of this orthodoxy and in the confusion, clergy have substituted "ethicalism." Stark and Glock comment that the ideology of the "new Breed" of clergy is characterized by "conceptions of God as Ultimate concern, as love, as poetry, as the divine essence in all of us--the ground of being..." They ask "how do they (these concepts) differ from humanism?"²⁷ This concept they believed related to religious commitment in a negative way. The future which is suggested for them underlines the seriousness of this loss of commitment:

The institutional shape of the religion of the future is a difficult thing to predict as is its theological content. Conceivably it may take a public character, as suggested recently by Robert Bellah or the invisible form anticipated by Thomas Luckmann. Or it may live on in a public witness conducted by priests with parishes similar to religions in Asia. Quite possibly religion in the future will be very different from anything we can now anticipate.²⁸

27 Stark and Glock, p. 210.

28 Ibid., pp. 223-24.

The central issue here is that of the question which is more basic regarding the nature of the church and its ministry at a deeper level. That may well be the motivation and intention of this project, in a final sense, to address the more basic nature of the shape and purpose of the church and her ministry by getting behind the difficulties of today and seeking to formulate a theology of ministry. It is certain that such a theology must not make the mistake of earlier generations of assuming that we can somehow get hold of pristine images of the church which should be legalized and held to for the remainder of time. Rather, we hope to find some clarity as to the symbol of the minister and his or her purpose and that of the church which can serve as pointers for at least the author. These commitments cannot be based on assumptions which deny all that has happened in the past one hundred years, but which seek to rediscover more ultimate formulations of meaning as religious.

Holmes remarks that it is his impression that the average successful clergyperson hides from the real thrust of the big questions being asked by Stark and Glock. I would contend that one of the most important tasks for today's ministry is that of discovering, for themselves and their people, theological formulations which will give expression to the faith in ways that provide a source of uniting commitment for persons in a time of confusion and radical change. This is a task which is being given very little attention by clergy anywhere, successful or not. If Holmes is speaking of those clergy who are in churches that are growing and vital, I would have to argue that recent studies show some evidence that is contrary to what we have frequently believed.

These studies report that the reason for growth among congregations may have little to do with their brand of theology. Though there are predominant numbers of conservative churches growing, they suggest that the reason for this may have little to do with their theological formulations, but have more to do with their level of intentionality in developing goals and in committing to those goals once developed. We, as members of mainline denominations, and as liberals, have frequently soothed our egos by suggesting that these churches are growing because they are full of people who want easy answers. I would agree that there may be some truth to that observation and would continue to challenge conservative churches and clergy to seek formulations of the faith which do not ignore the change around us. I believe that both the call of the gospel and the conditions for the in-breaking of the kingdom require the church to change and grow in openness. I would also argue that our response to that kind of inadequacy has been inappropriate as well. All too often we have been preoccupied with reacting to the inadequate theology of these churches and have failed to see the deeper contributions which these churches might offer us.

The growth and vitality of these churches frequently rests in the commitment with which the faith is held and the central place of the spiritual life within those traditions. As persons have done throughout the church's history, people today seek out the places where the life of the spirit is the most vital. While I would agree that many of the theological formulations of these churches are inadequate, I would then suggest that clergy in mainline, liberal traditions must

reformulate positions of faith which give serious attention to the relationship of old words like "evangelism", "conversion" and "new life in the spirit." We must reformulate, preach, teach and embody in our congregations this faith in such ways as will speak to the lives of persons.

Secondly, this formulation is not enough if it remains at an intellectual and abstract level of commitment. There is a difference between an intellectual assertion and a faithful commitment. These formulations must take from, or better yet, be derived from that which gives life to the community. John Biersdorf has found that the movement of persons from mainline traditions to sects, evangelical traditions and secular groups is related to the spiritual and experiential level of those groups. In his study of "vital religious communities" he found that people were turning to a variety of movements that offered "Meaning-laden experiences to help them put the rest of their lives together."²⁹ He says:

Religious communities which are vital and alive are those which meet the hunger for the experience of God and who bestow personhood, power and relationship. Formal membership, intellectual assent and busyness are not enough--involvement of the total person is required to satisfy the contemporary hunger for experience.³⁰

These movements have provided that kind of opportunity, one that involves the whole person in the kind of new life which persons of the early church professed. And the leaders of these groups sometimes embody it as well. We must, as clergy in mainline churches, ask

²⁹ John Biersdorf, Hunger for Experience (New York: Seabury, 1975), cover used.

³⁰ Ibid.

whether the confusion and lack of vitality in our churches is not as much a reflection of ourselves as anything else. I make this comment not to make us feel more keenly the inadequacy and guilt which we already feel in increasing numbers, but to raise the crucial nature of our own attentiveness to theological commitment of the faith and to the life of the spirit in our lives.

Theological commitment and spiritual devotion are placed here together because they suggest the combined nature of the task ahead of us. We have sought to formulate theological positions at times without checking them with the spiritual meanings which brought us to ministry and continue to call us forth. And we have been right in criticizing expressions of the spirit which are unchecked by the wisdom of reason and given guidance by sound theological formulations of our faith. But, the kind of clergyperson which is needed today is one whose theological life is rooted deeply within his or her spiritual life. We need sacramental persons who are willing to embody Christ and whose theological formulations arise from reflection upon the nature of Christ's incarnation historically and in our lives. This is why this study which began with a concern for theological and moral inadequacies will end by addressing spirituality.

In our rush to be professional we have forgotten the charismatic nature of priesthood and priestly calling. As have clergy frequently in our history, we have allowed duty and making ourselves important replace that which is central to the sacramental person, the transcendent servant. And yet, both we as clergy and laypersons still confess the centrality of that life. Two of the items which Strommen

rated the highest dealt with these elements:

A personal faith: It is obvious that the Gospel is known as "good news" for the minister personally and therefore he or she continues to grow in faith.

Recognition of one's own needs: Sincerely acknowledges his/her own spiritual dependence and can ask for and receive forgiveness. 31

These two foci combine to suggest the focus of the next chapter, as it deals with this personal embodiment of Christ in the symbol of the minister. We began our study by affirming the importance of the ministry for the vitality and the life of the church. The next chapter will show how that ministry and its symbol affect the community and become the bearer of God to the people. This symbol does not incarnate the transcendent at the surrender of humanness, but, as we will see, is rooted deeply within that which is common to all humanity. He or she will still be a servant, but he or she will be the transcendent, liminal servant.

31. Merton Strommen, David Shuller and Milo Buekke, Ministry in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) pp. 18-19.

CHAPTER 5

GUIDES IN THE WILDERNESS:

THE SYMBOL OF PRIEST IN HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Our study of the conception of ministry in the contemporary society has discovered that for many clergy and especially for Disciple clergy there is a loss of morale and a loss of esteem that arise from what we have suggested are both historical influences and failures on the part of many clergy to respond to our contemporary worlds. We have suggested that if the ministry of Christ today is going to recover its glory and power that it must concentrate, not so much on what it does, but on who it is as symbolic bearer of God in the community of faith. He or she must, I have suggested, recover the transcendent-sacramental nature as priests and discover ways to gain clarity and vision in their theological understandings of themselves and the church, and increased commitment to spiritual and devotional involvement in the process. Better, it is in this process that the recovery of that transcendent nature will be found.

ROOTS OF THE SHAMAN

We have suggested that there is something different about the nature of the ministry that sets apart those who are ordained. Indeed, a central struggle of the contemporary minister is to discover how he or she is different. What Holmes traced in broad strokes in the Future Shape of Ministry as the symbolic nature of the Sacramental Person, he makes explicit in his later book The Priest in Community. It asks,

"What is the content of this symbol in the community? and "How does it relate to the community?"

It is interesting that Holmes may well have gone through the same journey as the author and many clergy enroute to his current understanding. He tells of preaching a sermon while a chaplain at Louisiana State University on the nature of priesthood. In that sermon he explained that "a priest is just like everyone else, a human being, who lives out his life just like every person. It is wrong to expect anything more of him than we do of ourselves. Why ask for his prayers ... when we can pray just as well ourselves."¹ After the sermon a young graduate student who had been acting as his server argued:

"Father, about that sermon, you'll never be just like every man to me. You're a priest and that's different." I wrote it off as incurably romantic ... Somehow his comment stuck with me ... I am grateful ... For it has provided a slight clue to the mysterious experience of priesthood and from time to time saved me from complete perplexity. It is the experience of a power in myself as priest which is clearly not the result of my personal characteristics or skill or education or anything else that I achieve or control. It is the observation of a power in other priests, which can be obscured by the perversity of human kind, but never obliterated. ... priestly power, the ability of the designated priest by virtue of that selection to evoke a sense of the numinous.²

Holmes' experience is one of dealing with the suggestion that somehow, as clergy, we are in possession of a power not our own. And, as did Holmes, many clergy struggle with this suggestion, especially in a time when that power appears to be questioned and the spirit of professionalism has suggested that we are "just like everyone else, only with different skills".

1 Urban T. Holmes, III, Priest in Community (New York:Seabury, 1978) p. 9

2 Ibid., p. 10

What is raised clearly for us here is the question of priestly power. How do we understand this unique power without denying the power of every human being to have direct access to the powers and healing graces of God without mediation of any sort? The answer to that question for Holmes is that symbolic mode of priestly function which we have traced through the history of religious expression. He comments:

There is in every religious group, a smaller group, usually a group of one person, who is the priest in the symbol of the bridge-maker between God and man to the community.³

It is this "bridge" figure that he has portrayed throughout history as the sacramental person, or the transcendent image within the configuration of priesthood. As he has suggested, in our previous discussions, the loss of that element at any time in history was central to the loss of vitality and effectiveness among clergy at that time and has led to a loss of identity and a lowering of esteem in the contemporary era. Our thesis is that it is in the rediscovery of this symbolic function as transcendent servants that we will rediscover our identity as ministers and that the esteem and effectiveness of the ministry and the church will be restored. And further, that such a rediscovery will provide an empowerment of ministry that does not deny the power of others in the community, but rather, empowers them as well.

How then is the minister different? We have remarked that the most prevalent image of ministry today is that of the pastoral director, as one who engineers the ministry of the church. She coordinates the various ministries. This minister is then, as my fellow minister put it "the representative of the churches' ministry". He seeks to enable

3 Ibid., p. 1

the ministries of others. So far, we have no particular arguments with the concept. The ministry of the reformed church has always understood itself as an enabling ministry of the larger ministry of the church, the laity. This minister has directed the various ministries of the church into coordinated efforts and has represented the church to the outside world. However, we would argue that such an understanding is fragmented. There is in the very "setting aside" of the ordained minister the thrusting of that minister into the service of a power which is rooted in the consciousness of humanity back to the ancient shaman. The minister is different.

As Holmes suggests, he is not different because he is somehow morally pure or infallible. The whiskey priest in Graham Green's The Power and the Glory helps us understand that the power and glory of God "shine through the life and death of this very ordinary human being with a fondness for women and alcohol"⁴ because he is a priest. The difference is then not necessarily found in character of the priest as morally better than others. Such a notion was the mistake of the Donatist heresies and is not what Holmes is suggesting.

Nor does he suggest the difference is to be found in the cotton candy images of priesthood that we see in the quaint, kindly, grandfather images of films like "Going My Way" and "A Man Called Peter". Such is hardly the image which we receive from a man who was crucified for being too offensive to those of religious orthodoxy. None of these are accurate says Holmes:

⁴ Ibid., p. 10

I contend that priestly power has nothing to do with such puritan excesses, nor does it require that the priest be one without first hand knowledge of sin. At the same time I am arguing that he is different, and that people have the right to expect that he acknowledges the difference and embraces a unique vocation of compassion and clarity of mind that requires a disciplined moral life.⁵

This is the heart of our thesis, that there is inherent in the very nature of priesthood or ministry a uniqueness that rests not only in its function, but in the empowerment of the minister by the prayers of the people in setting him or her aside and in the continuing occupation of the symbolic role of the priest. The heart of that difference lies as we will see in the symbolic function of the "priest" as seen by the community and world.

Religious practitioners, whether we call them pastor, preacher, parson, minister or priest, become symbols in and of themselves. The priest is the fourth universal element of religious experience, the other three being creed, cult, and community. He or she functions as "the focal person who upholds the symbols of the community and becomes himself a symbol to the community"⁶ As Ronald Osborn observes regarding the priestly function in the New Testament, we find that this priestly mode is particularly related to that of the whole churches understanding:

Some of the priestly motifs which Scripture uses for the common ministry of all Christians it, nevertheless, applies with peculiar intensity to those who bear ministerial office. Indeed, we may even say that the office is defined by the degree to which it bears this particularity of priestly character within the priestly life which all God's people share

Society arrays him in a distinctive garb, addresses him by a special title, and treats him as a member of a peculiar community. ... the early church saw in the consecration of the priest and in

5 Ibid., p. 11 6 Ibid., p. 12

his distinctive place in society a parable of Christian calling. With peculiar intensity the priestly character of all Christians comes to focus in the life of the minister. ... he must incarnate in his own person the spirit of the church as a consecrate community. In a peculiar sense he bears the title "man of God".⁷

In these statements Osborn expresses with particular vividness the way the symbol of the priest operates in a way that is integral to the community's understanding of itself and of the Christian vocation. He or she functions in this way to represent to the people his or her experience of God. Though this image is not perceived the same, nor does it operate the same for any two persons, nor does it identify the priest with God in anything but a symbolic manner, it does, says Holmes, somehow represent the numinous in our experience.⁸ The priest as symbol is rooted in the common evolution of human consciousness for Holmes, particularly as it understands its religious experience.

LANDMARKS OF THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

The religious experience, for Holmes, has to do with the movement from Chaos to Cosmos. In the form of an extended allegory he takes us through the history of this development, moving from chaos to more ordered existence, from the depths of the sea, through the wilderness to the city. In so doing we discover the evolution of the symbol of priest and its function within human consciousness.

The journey begins as we find ourselves on the edge of the fathomless ocean. As we move out from the coast we move into a country-

⁷ Ronald Osborn, In Christ's Place (St. Louis: Bethany, 1967) pp. 164-66.

⁸ Urban T. Holmes, III, Priest in Community (New York: Seaburg, 1978) p. 17

side that is:

... wilderness, terrifyingly empty, but filled with a marvelous quiet. There are beautiful birds and graceful antelopes, as well as man-eating tigers and poisonous snakes. The journey takes one through incongruous terrain where nothing fits. But then, the land begins to acquire a kind of primeval order. You get a glimpse of a path leading westward. Then you discover you are not alone. You meet others on the same journey. You talk to each other as you walk ... struggling to share what brings you to this wilderness. You tell stories filled with terror and humor about the ocean depths from which you have come and then about yourself and where you hope to go. You share, inexplicably, some of the most intimate details of your life.

As you walk and talk following an ever clearer path, you come to a great river. On the other side the wilderness appears to end. You can see cultivated fields, carefully constructed homes, villages laid out with planning and in the far distance there is a hint of the smoke of industry. You look for a way across.⁹

The realm between the great river and the ocean is, for Holmes, descriptive of our consciousness in one realm, of which there are two. This realm and the one which exists on the other side of the river. This first one he calls anti-structure. This is the receptive mode of the two realms of consciousness. "It abuts the mystery of our unknowing or the end of our consciousness."¹⁰ This mode of consciousness as opposed to the action mode on the other side of the river processes experience in spatial images rather than temporal images, in concrete rather than abstract ways, in holistic rather than analytical or differentiated, in nonlinear terms rather than linear terms. It is analogical as opposed to digital and it is centrally intuitive rather than rational. And it may be more creative, more unbounded and open to suggestion.¹¹

As one moves from this antistructure across the river to structure there are certain "apprehensions, ciphers, or archetypes

9 Ibid., pp. 20-21 10 Ibid., p. 21 11 Ibid., pp. 21-23

that begin first at the edges of the river. "These fundamental representations which are ambiguous, powerful, frightening and open, clothe in a very immediate fashion the energy of what the Christian tradition calls "the word of God" that emerges from the abyss."¹² These are the basic things out of which the human consciousness is built and the motivation out of which we act. They are the basic heart of all meaning.

If these create a oneness in our world they are, for Holmes, Symbols. If they destroy and tear apart our world, they are diabolos. "For the Christian, of course, the primal symbol or sacrament is Jesus. He is the Christ, the primordial representation of self, and the embodiment of God's love enabling our wholeness"¹³

In moving beyond the river one enters the land of the root metaphor. Taking the symbols of the other side, we generalize them into metaphors. This metaphor completes the sentence "I assume the world is (like) a _____.¹⁴ The root metaphor of Christians is that of death and resurrection.

As we move further west, the metaphors become elaborated in either primordial myths or seminal plots. The primordial myth is a true story about the relationship between people and God, who lies beyond the ocean. The whole story of Christ's life is, for Christians, the primordial myth. A seminal plot is a "less profound root metaphor elaborated into a theme which shall become part of our personal story."¹⁵ These plots are frequently characterized by totems, which are generally images related to our personal stories.

12 Ibid., p. 23 13 Ibid., p. 24 14 Ibid 15 Ibid., p. 25

You'll remember as we journeyed through the wilderness, we told stories, personal stories. Thus, these stories belong to the area of the wilderness closest to the river. They are also formation stories because "they constitute our personal script and define in imaginative ways the manner in which we form for ourselves the energy of God, clothed in symbol and diabol, root metaphor and myth and seminal plot.

Before moving along in the journey, Holmes makes three comments about the wilderness from which we have just come.

First, "the contemporary western technological culture either denies altogether or at least drastically downgrades the receptive mode of human consciousness. We suffer from a collective extroversion."¹⁶ Though there have been exceptions all along, beginning as we have suggested with the Desert Fathers, the mystics and the religious orders. And though the ministry and individuals have remarkably discovered ways back across the river, the dominance of the active mode remains clear.

Second, the receptive mode of consciousness "insists on operating with all its possibilities and risks whether or not we choose to acknowledge it. If suppressed, it will surface"¹⁷ We have discovered this truth historically again and again as Christians have been forced to find new paths to the receptive mode often outside the church and without the help of the religious leadership. In many ways pietism had such a beginning. Many of the spiritual movements which we see in today's sects and the counterculture of the sixties have developed out of such a need.

16 Ibid., p. 26 17 Ibid.

Third, "THE ROOTS OF THE PRIESTLY FUNCTION LIE SQUARELY WITHIN THE WILDERNESS OF THE ANTISTRUCTURE"¹⁸ It is here that we discover the roots of the symbol of the priest and it is in a consideration of that mode that Holmes' study of the Priest in Community takes us. It is the land of the wilderness, of the numinous. It is out of such a mode which Holmes and the author believe the answer to the ministers' dilemma today must emerge. The priest moves from this land across the river to a land that is increasingly ordered. The meaning of the experience begins to be important. Ambiguity and unpredictableness are suddenly gone. As we continue, we discover that we are entering the suburbs of a great city.

As we move deeper into this metropolis, we see that its existence depends upon all its inhabitants working smoothly together in a shared system. Without control and predictability of such a system this wonderful order, which is able to accomplish so much would collapse, into chaos. There is a deep satisfaction in the clarity of univocal speech and precise expectations.¹⁹

When we cross the river it is obvious that we have stepped into what Holmes understands as the action mode of bimodal consciousness. We have moved from the world of story to that of system. From the world of symbol to the world of sign. From an emphasis on being to an emphasis on doing. In the action mode of the city, the highest values are prediction and control, in the interest of production and consumption. All of these are a part of a univocal mode of the logical concept.

We have traced this allegory at length because if we are to understand the receptive mode which is missing from our ministry, we must have some help from symbols and allegories that can draw us back

18 Ibid. 19 Ibid., p. 27

to the wilderness. This image helps us understand the image of ministry suggested for our contemporary society. We should make clear that neither our argument nor Holmes is anti-intellectual. The image of priest suggested is a bi-modal image, one which will need both modes of consciousness if it is to be whole. "The priest exists as a symbol located in the receptive mode of consciousness, as well as a role image in the action mode."²⁰ And, yet our culture is so dominated by an active, univocal, analytical mode that we must discover the meaning of the receptive mode. Further, it is within this mode that the symbol of the priest is rooted and that the authority and power of the minister emerge. It is that receptive mode of ministry that persons expect in the priest but have seldom found. "The priest stands with one foot in the receptive mode and one in the action mode, a liminal or threshold figure, called to symbolize what he on his own cannot even imagine: the inner world of God, providing humankind with the light to see God's intention for creation."²¹ The priest symbolized the movement of religion from chaos to cosmos, from the wilderness to the city. What he symbolizes is both the historical journey of human consciousness from chaos to order, and the religious journey which occurs again and again. This is not a single journey or even a journey born twice, but one to be walked again and again. It is as a journey around a cylinder that is ever widening. This journey provides the image for what is for the Christian the primary movement of life.

We have earlier argued for a church and a ministry which is ever changing, one which must be able to change in response to God's will.

20 Ibid., p. 35 21 Ibid., p. 53

We have insisted that the ministry must formulate images of the faith which provide sufficient unifying force to be embodied with renewed conviction by their congregations and themselves. As Osborn has suggested, the priest must embody that which is the central vocation of all the people of God, and of the church. I believe there is suggested by Holmes here an image which suggests an answer for the ministry and the church. It is one which is being presented on a number of fronts today, in the nature of theology of story, from the field of religious education by such persons as John Westerhoff, and from the images of faith and moral development posited by Fowler, Kohlberg and others. It is an image which is given greater clarity by the thought of A. N. Whitehead and Process Theology in terms of its assumptions about the fundamental religious drives of humanity as it seeks to embody the incarnate form of God on earth.

SYMBOLIC MODE OF MINISTRY

We argued in the opening chapter that we must discover an understanding of ministry which would take more seriously both the call to servanthood and self-giving and at the same time deeper personal spirituality and enjoyment. It is within this image of priest that we would suggest that such a model can be found. We have argued as well that much of ministry today suffers from a lack of clarity and low esteem and have sought to discover the way for the minister to recover his or her unique position and power. It is to that focus of the symbolic functioning of this receptive mode of priesthood that Holmes is the most helpful.

Holmes' understanding of symbolic functioning of the priest in community rests on Jung. Later in his life, as he sought to describe that which was beyond the phenotypical expressions in different cultures, Jung wrote:

a sequence in life which begins when God moves to the collective unconscious, and finally is realized in the individual unconsciousness. Humankind in this view is not only genotypical and phenotypical, but also nootypical (from the greek word for mind, noos) a foreshadowing or imaging the mind of God. It is to the relative independence of mind from brain that we can attribute human freedom and humankind's ability to transcend biological or sociological destiny, while yet limited by both.²²

Hardy and others have asserted that this image of God's mind helps shape human consciousness and that humanity's memory participates in God's mind and purpose. This understanding provides particular richness for the understanding of the symbolic function of the priest. For the priest as symbolic represents that movement to the mind of God. The priest becomes the servant of the mind of God and humanities' journey in that process.

This archetypal image can, suggests Holmes, be traced through the historical development of the religious community. It's roots are, as we have suggested, found in the ancient figure of the shaman. The shaman has from the earliest cultures been the one who was identified as in most immediate contact with the mind of God. As such he sought to bring his people understanding of the world. He became a bridge to the spirits. This movement was to provide a semblance of order in the chaotic world of these early people. By initiating this movement the shaman became the hero. Art as early as that of the Cro-Magnon humans

²² Carl Jung, The Symbolic Life Pastoral Psychology No. 80 (1954)

portray shaman like figures in this heroic role. At the same time, there are found side by side with these figures in some places feminine symbols which increasingly appear as mother gods. The development of these mother gods as symbols of nature, fertility and birth, death and regeneration become increasingly common among ancient humankind as they began to develop agriculture. But, because of the unpredictable nature of hunting and gathering and agriculture for early humanity who could never be sure whether the next crop would grow or not, the Great Mother God on whom they depended was seen as fickle and capricious. The dominant mode of consciousness was one of the receptive mode, ritualized through the effort of the fertility cults and nature religions which are present to the Old Testament ancestors. The Great Mother gods are Anath, the Canaanite Great Mother, and others.

The function of the priest was increasingly to make life bearable if not fruitful in the face of humanity's precarious and chaotic life. "This function reached its culmination as the priest became the person who freed humanity's consciousness from the slavery to the Great Mother and her capricious behavior. The priest who by his message of understanding effects this liberation from the feminine symbol is even more hero"²³ He becomes the prototypical slayer of the dragon. It is out of this movement that the forefathers in the Jewish tradition emerge. Gen. 3:1-5 gives an account of "a series of heroes culminating in Moses, who led the people from the Great Mother into new consciousness of God as the sky king"²⁴ This is the image of the priest who brings the

23 Urban T. Holmes, III, Priest in Community (New York: Seabury, 1978)

24 Ibid.

people across the river into the action mode.

For the first time, the self moves its identification from the receptive mode of the intuitive to the action mode of the rational mind. This is the rise of the masculine symbol and the subjugation of the feminine symbol and mode. A distinct dualism is created that will continue and a great gulf ensues between them. "There follows a tendency to identify evil with nature, mother and the feminine. Into such a world of meaning came Christianity and later Islam. There is little wonder that a fundamental puritanism, born of a rational reduction of human consciousness, pervades Judaism, Christianity and Islam."²⁵

Though, as we will argue, it is not characteristic of the ministry of Jesus nor that of many clergy throughout our history, it has operated from the earliest times as a dominant mode of consciousness which has subverted the transcendent movement which began with the early shaman. The receptive mode continued largely through "folk religion" and has continued in informal settings into the contemporary era. Holmes remarks that there is little wonder that the most spiritual time for his children occurred when they went away to camp and spent time in nature, returning as "changed persons". When subverted it has found expression in secular forms as well. Yet, the failure of the church to provide such an opportunity and the failure of the minister to embody such a mode is particularly telling today. He comments:

Contemporary man has been deprived of his birthright. The technological society, with its one-dimensional values of control and prediction leaves us confused. It often works to explain away intimations of the numinous or to reduce them to univocal categories,

²⁵ Ibid., p. 60

rather than risk chaos. These atavistic yearnings lead us to the edge of the fathomless ocean. At the risk of chaos yes, but to ignore them is to shield oneself from the awareness of God's immediate presence in our lives.²⁶

But, this submerging of the receptive mode and the dominance of the action mode has made clearer the unique role of the minister in our society.

The priest is more than a sacrificial official. He is a mystagogue. To be a mystagogue is to lead the people into the mystery that surrounds our life. The mystagogue comes out of the darkness of man's evolutionary past, charged with the responsibility of deepening humanity's understanding of itself, by word and action, by the very nature of the priest's presence.²⁷

The question now is, how does that presence transform? In what way does the symbol of the mystagogue lead people into mystery?

The question addressed here is the nature of the priest's symbolic functioning. Let us return to the discussion when one of my fellow clergy argued that he was a minister "just like everyone else". The minister, as the discussion continued, settled into the difficulty he had with the minister as sacramental person. He told of an experience early in his ministry. He was making a call on a parish-member who was seriously ill in the hospital. As he entered the hospital room the woman, somewhat delirious, on seeing him cried "Oh Jesus, you've come". "I am not Jesus," he said, "and that kind of projection is what makes me uncomfortable." As the discussion continued, I was struck by the remarks of two other clergy. One recounted an experience in which early in his ministry he had encountered an experience which made him consider the nature of the symbolic power of the priest. At a fellowship dinner a woman had come to him complaining of a terrible headache

²⁶ Ibid., p. 66 ²⁷ Ibid., p. 67

and asked him to pray for her. Without giving it much thought, he did so. But, he said, just a few minutes later the woman returned bubbling that the headache was gone. "At first", he said, "I was uncomfortable with this as well, in fact I still am uncomfortable, but I have come to accept this power as one not my own and have learned not to block what others perceive as the power of God through me."

The discussion moved to a reflection upon the nature of this symbolic power and to the question of authority that is inherent in that power. To this another clergy responded: "I have made peace with this issue by understanding the nature of my authority, as coming from "The Author" from the Originator; I am empowered by a power not my own. I am somehow one who is entrusted with, by the nature of priesthood, the power and authority of The Author." It is this understanding of authority and empowerment of which I speak. Our authority and power rest in that we are, as priests, empowered by the community and perceived by the community to be the shaman, the bearer of God. And, to the extent that one embodies that presence as did Christ, the answer to my friend who cried "I am not Jesus" would be, "Yes, you are!" The priest is not the messiah, nor is he or she capable of claiming the presence of Christ by anything than by symbolic action, but to a great extent, the minister is the one who symbolizes the presence of Christ for the community and for the individual.

The symbol of the priest as the liminal servant, between God and humanity works in such a way that it calls forth from persons the power of God which they themselves possess. Holmes describes this:

The request for a blessing is related to a person's desire for change, for healing, and for wholeness. The priest is perceived as the one who has power to change people.

The perception is rooted in our receptive mode of thought which universal religion would have us abandon. It is a projection of the power that is within one's own reality to change, to be open to the presence of God in our particular life.²⁸

All of us then have present the totality of the bimodal consciousness. We possess action modes which provide only representations, and rather inadequate ones at that, of our experience. But the symbols and metaphors, myths and stories operate within us all the time. In them we represent the same experience, usually unconsciously.

The priest is through the shaman, grounded deep within the receptive mode and operates to catch symbols and myths within our receptive mode, and objectifies them for us. ... archetypal images that are within us. He is the object of our projections. The priest, as shaman is mana-person within our own inner wilderness, representing to us the presence of God within. The light the priest sheds on the community is as the light of the moon. What is seen in the priest is the reflection of what is perceived of God in the people. This is true for the priest in the receptive mode. In the active mode, the priest acts as a sun, a light that is his own.²⁹

The nature of the task is not unlike the story told by Henri Nouwen of a student of his. It seems this student was one with whom he had had more than the usual teacher-student relationship. Both had in the time he was there grown quite close. After the student had left the seminary and gone into the parish, he called to say he would be in town and would like to see Nouwen. When they met, the young man and Nouwen sat for a time discussing what had been happening in their lives in the last months. And then they were very quiet. After a while, the young man said, "It's very good to be together." "Yes it is," said Nouwen. And then they were quiet again. It was not an uncomfortable quiet, just

28 Ibid., p. 88 29 Ibid.

a time of being together. The young man said to Nouwen, "You know, being with you is like being in the presence of Christ." I had no need to protest, or deny, only to say, "It is the Christ in you that recognizes the Christ in me."³⁰

That story portrays the nature of this symbolic functioning. To be the priest is to be the one particularly called to symbolize Christ in the community, hoping that somehow we might call forth the Christ in those around us. It is to this task that we have been called by the community and to which we are ordained. As Nouwen reminds us, to such an empowerment we need not protest. This is for Holmes the first step in making conscious what is unconscious, as we objectify that which is within by "projecting it" on another object, in this case the priest. Though all persons in certain ways provide this function for one another, the particular rooting of the priest within the consciousness makes him or her especially empowered for this kind of projection.

The priest in this mode seldom strikes persons in a neutral way. And, thus, the minister frequently finds herself the object of negative reactions as well. By the liminal character of the symbol, we call persons to journey into their own wilderness; which is occupied not only with angels, but with demons, and tigers as well. But, this task too may be valuable. Though it is difficult for the pastor who enters the church expecting to affect everyone as angel and no one as demon, the discovery is often unsettling and requires some understanding of one's function. What is required if one is to be faithful to the call of the priest as shaman, is to stay with the persons in the wilderness, fighting the demons that one might discover the healing angels.

³⁰ Henri Nouwen, cited from lectures by John Westerhoff given at School of Theology at Claremont. November 1980.

The key to this movement is what the church has traditionally understood as the function of illumination. In the past four centuries that task has been generally assumed by preaching and teaching functions. Yet, the tradition of individual guidance of souls and struggles with individuals, in the way which we are suggesting, has always been an element of concern for some. The problem has been, as I have commented, that throughout the 19th century this individual care took an active, rational mode as well. The illumination of the receptive mode is a more imagistic, spiritual function of the priest as mystagogue. He or she is an instrument of God's purpose in heightening or expanding the consciousness of persons and their possibilities, as he or she leads them into the mystery of their own nootype. In the next chapter, I will explore the nature of the priest's illuminative function in more depth. This function we will see is not only a product of what he or she does, but more of who the priest is.

RECEPTIVE MODE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

This function of illuminating the darkness is the overarching function of the minister, as he or she is bearer of salvific illumination. There are few functions which express more clearly Christ's understanding of his ministry. He was the "Light of the world". Yet that function has been distorted in at least two ways in the Christian tradition. First, beginning with John, the nature of Christ's salvific illumination was narrowed to that of the Word made flesh. Christ as illuminating is paralleled with Logos. Such a distinction was to place God and Christ in the action mode.

The logos is a concept common to the ancient philosophical world. It means reason. To the philosopher of that time to say that God is mind was not to say he is consciousness but that he is reasoning consciousness. Reason is of course of the action mode and this locates the image of God in that mode. Logos in the action mode therefore divides.³¹

The symbol left the function of priesthood divided, as the servant of reason, and the functional action mode.

The second thing we have misunderstood about Christ's ministry as the bearer of light, is that such illumination must discover its function within the wilderness of darkness.

The act of illumination takes place in the contrast between darkness of Good Friday and the light of Easter. We easily forget that light is dependent upon darkness and order upon chaos.³²

What is needed has been an understanding of illumination which restores the whole of Christ's illuminating function. The symbol which is both wilderness and chaos, light and dark, reason and passion. Rahner has suggested that the necessary balance has been the focus on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, "designating the Lord as Him who brings the one and the all into unity and which in turn unifies and brings into man's interior soul the fulness of him whom it designates in this sense."³³ Such a focus does provide a feminine, uniting, passionate image which breaks in upon the rational, masculine, dividing mode. And yet Holmes believes that it suggests too much the sentimental piety of the 17th century. The Protestant version of the Sacred Heart is the portrait of the simpering, sweet Jesus. We have spoken of the Disciples' emphasis on the person of Jesus as a unifying element which frequently rescued Disciples from becoming a "head religion". Though more recently Disci-

31 Holmes, The Priest in Community, p. 171

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., p. 173

ples have rejected the focus as frequently syrupy and too sentimental. But, a careful study might discover the reason why people like to sing some of the old songs about the "Jesus of Galilee" is that they provide this missing, unifying element to a service that is often too "intellectual".

The restoring image which Holmes suggests is the balance of Logos with Eros. Such an embodiment by the priest's understanding of illumination would, whether in worship or counseling, provide the balance to the over-rational without sentimentalizing the receptive mode of Jesus. Says Holmes:

Eros speaks of infinite emptiness that longs to be filled by the Other, culminating in the infinite fullness of God. Eros is the desire for oneness. It connotes harmony and synthesis. Mythologically it has always been conceived as a joining of masculine and feminine into one complete being.³⁴

It is the image of androgeny, not of the body, but of consciousness. Eros involves the combining of the rational and intuitive selves, the chaos and the order, the feminine and the masculine, the receptive and the active. "If Christ is Logos, then Christ is also Eros, and abyss because he is fully human."³⁵ If we are to embody Christ, as illuminating salvation, this understanding of the "erotic" mode provides a necessary corrective.

This power in Eros was discussed as early as the fourth century by St. Gregory of Nyssa. He observed that Eros and darkness are necessary conditions of assimilation with the Godhead. Eros is that love that overwhelms humankind in God's self-revelation. Then Christ, as the disclosure of God, is also Eros. What stopped Gregory was the image of

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid., p. 175

as the disclosure of God, is also Eros. What stopped Gregory was the image of Eros as passion, especially sexual passion. Others have suggested that erotic nature more directly. For Holmes the power of Eros is that it:

brings humankind back to the primordial unity of life found at the edge of the abyss. It is that drive to oneness of which St. Augustine spoke in the Confessions: the restless heart that seeks God, the One. Eros is the channeling of the energy³⁶ from the abyss for the purpose of integration and transformation.

That drive was better understood by the mystics who frequently used the analogy of lovemaking for revelation. They understood that drive to oneness, the restless heart, the channeling of the energy seeking integration and transformation were all related to both revelation and lovemaking. Westerhoff comments that they frequently saw the Song of Songs as the best expression of the divine-human relationship. Dame Juliana of Norwich, for example, saw these writings as analogies which could be turned around. Westerhoff takes her cue in allowing the analogy to be used once in one way and then in the opposite. I would offer the following passage as one which suggests this relationship between Eros and revelation:

I was asleep but my heart was awake
A voice! My beloved was knocking.
"Open to my my sister, my darling,
My dove, my perfect one!
For my head is drenched with dew,
My Locks with the damp of the night.
"I have taken off my dress,
How can I put it on again?
I have washed my feet,
How can I dirt them again?"
My beloved extended his hand through the opening
And my feelings were aroused for him.
"I arose to open to my beloved:
And my hands dripped with myrrh,

36 Ibid., p. 75

And my fingers with liquid myrrh
On the handles of the latch.

I opened to my beloved.
But my beloved had turned away and had gone!
My heart went out to him as he spoke.
I searched for him, but I did not find him
And I called him, but he did not answer me.
Song of Songs 5:2-6

That is the nature of Eros, which Holmes seems to advocate, the searching, longing soul, seeking to be one.

The priest as the image of Christ, the symbol of illumination, is androgenous; embodying a feminine Eros and guarded against demonic possibilities by masculine Logos. Dory Previn calls these polar images of Christ to mind in a way that starkly suggests this nature:

Jesus was an androgyne,
Jesus was a he and she
Jesus was a freako, baby
Just like you and me.
Jesus was a pagan,
Jesus was a priest,
Jesus was a beauty,
Jesus was a beast.³⁷

Here then is the symbolic representation of the priest as bimodal. And, though it is characterized by both sides, the side which has dominated the priesthood and larger culture for centuries is that of the masculine mode. We must, if the priesthood is to recover the transcendent element which has been suggested, restore the feminine, receptive mode.

THE SERVANT IN THE RECEPTIVE MODE

As did Osborn, so too does Holmes clothe this symbol in servanthood. This is the root image of the symbol. But he wants to prevent

37 Dory Previn, cited Ibid., p. 176

the type of degeneration of servanthood into philanthropy which characterizes many clergy today.

To be a living symbol is to serve God's people at the heart of their need; to know God as he knows them. This requires; however that the priest not shrink from the roots of his own power in the receptive mode of the people's consciousness. To be an effective priest is to serve in such a way that those to whom we minister are made aware of the entire breadth of their own meaningful world. In this alone is freedom.³⁸

In this formulation there is provided, I suggest, that image of service that denies neither the power of the clergyperson nor the power and freedom of the laity. The power of the priest as servant is found in his or her ability to evoke a mythic and symbolic meaning, that frequently lies latent within the members of the community who recognize that person as priest. We would like to consider the nature of that servanthood more directly, through a consideration of the characteristics of this servanthood and in the next chapter, by providing some tentative sketches of the direction of the journey from wilderness to chaos and the way that movement takes shape in the life of ministry.

Holmes' analyses the nature of the minister as symbol or "angel" in terms of five attributes. The first of these attributes is the realistic servant. The servant of the symbolic priest is most closely related to what might be called the humble servant, but for the abuses which some ministers have suffered in recent years in the name of humility. What is meant here by humble is the ability to be realistic, "real--coming from the earth (humus)." True humility is "a firm rootedness". As the priest within the receptive mode, one is rooted in the terms of being able to "perceive ourselves as valued without

38 Ibid., p. 100

having to prove ourselves by the standards of the action mode. Humility has to do with an awareness of both our sacramentality as priests and our active participation in the end which we serve for God" 39 This type of realistic servanthood is needed for a clergy whose particular sin has been acting so as to "please the most people". There are signs however that such political behavior, though its necessity is realized for Disciple clergy in the present polity, may run counter to that which is valued by laity and clergy in the Disciple tradition. The kind of humility of which Holmes speaks is an authenticity and realness that shines through the person of the minister. It requires one to be naked, and vulnerable with his or her people.

In the Strommen Survey, the category which received the most positive responses of all was that of personal honesty. This category assessed the importance of being able to: express feelings honestly with strength to resist pressures to compromise. (A suggestion clearly at odds with the kind of servanthood in which we have frequently found ourselves seeking to "please everyone" and to discover ways to keep ourselves afloat.) This category related to four items:

1. Demonstrates honest affection for other people.
2. Keeps own word--fulfills promises.
3. Adapts well to new situations or circumstances.
4. Maintains personal integrity despite pressures to compromise.⁴⁰

The category which received the most negative responses was the avoidance of intimacy: the minister preaches abstractly, gossips, gives the impression of being in a hurry, and interprets criticism of

39 Ibid.

40 Strommen, Merton, David Shuller and Milo Buekke, Ministry In America, (New York:Harper & Row, 1980) p. 22-23

the program as a personal affront. The realistic servant is one embodying both authenticity and the ability to be vulnerable and intimate.

It is my experience that the difficulty of the political nature of the minister, combined with the weakened discipline of spiritual devotion, have left the minister uncomfortable with risking intimacy. And so he or she avoids that intimacy by busyness.

A recent study conducted by the Research Center in Religion and Society relates the low morale of ministry to the inability to be realistic in this sense. Again, this issue is related to support, since when the minister is feeling anxious, angry or discouraged, few feel they can be honest, real and vulnerable with their parishioners. The professional image prohibits such honesty. Yet Hartley confirms the importance of this need:

It is important for lay persons to recognize that it is quite normal for their pastor, like other human beings, to experience disappointments and sagging morale. That recognition, plus sensitivity and compassion, will help the minister cope and thus will strengthen the church. It is the minister however who must take the initiative. Openness, together with a strategy for avoiding or dealing with frustrations, are essential steps.⁴¹

This is the conclusion of Bryant's study as well, that to confront the gap between sagging morale and establish the necessary parish-priest relationship, the minister must be open and honest as well. We have come out of a time which has suggested the importance of a professional stance of aloofness that has perhaps led to such a lack of realistic servanthood. Or perhaps we are like our friend, just afraid we will be "used up" if we are too open, too vulnerable. Such vulnera-

⁴¹ Virgil Hartley, "Editorial", A.D. (February 6, 1981) 1.

bility provides an intimacy that is sacramental. "The sacrament always points to that over which it has no control, but of which it is strangely expressive. The priest serves a mystery, in which he is rooted and which feeds his life of service" ⁴² The servant is realistic.

Second, the priest is the servant of change. The servant in this mode sees nothing as permanent and yet sees things as purposeful, and goal-oriented in the direction of the Kingdom. Redemption is the synthesis of opposites. The priest becomes in some way, a living parable, as did Christ; a philosopher's stone which enables purposeful change to happen. We will turn more directly to the nature of this change in the next chapter.

Third, the priest as symbol is the discerning servant. Though the emphasis throughout our study has been on the development of the receptive mode, here is the suggestion that there is a need for reason and the trained intellect. As we earlier talked of the need for intimacy and involvement, we must agree with Holmes' call for the ability to distance oneself from feelings at times in order to make critical judgments that save us from being victimized by our feelings. This kind of discernment was the model taught by St. Ignatius. The skill of St. Ignatius and of many of the Desert Fathers was the ability to pull back and assess with wisdom. Though the servant must escape the idolatrous worship of wisdom which occurred in ancient Israel, he or she needs to connect with the kind of wisdom which is more of the feminine receptive mode as well. It is more oracle than system and more intuitive than logical reduction.

⁴² Holmes, The Priest in Community, p. 103

It has more to do with understanding than knowing. It is to be the archetypical image of the wise old man, the mystagogue who brings both enlightenment and ecstasy.

This discernment is when the Disciples' "biblical mind" has been at its best. It has sought to place itself within understanding distance of the scriptures, and the wisdom therein, to discover the faith that brings enlightenment.

Fourth, is the liminal servant. Here, the image of the priest as the servant taking us from the structure to the anti-structure and back finds its center. The liminal servant lives on the threshold, on the edge of the antistructure marked by the great river. He or she must be one who lives on both sides of the river. The liminal servant will be explored more in the final chapter as we address the nature of the threshold and the minister who journeys over that threshold. This servant is the errant knight characterized by Don Quixote. She is the liminal practitioner, the priest outside the established path, conducting the soul to heaven.

Finally, the priest as symbol is an authoritative servant. There are few questions more central to this study or to the regaining of esteem and vitality of clergy (and churches) than that of the nature of an authoritative servanthood. There are two kinds of authority, comments Holmes, the internal and the external authorities. The internal authority "possesses the power by virtue of the inner conversation with the symbols and diabolos, which lie at the heart of humanity's consciousness and motivation."⁴³ This is the authority of which we wrote earlier as one

⁴³ Ibid., p. 117

that derives from "The Author". Such authority is the authority of Jesus and is of the receptive mode. This authority exists as much from vulnerability of the realistic servant as from any external force. The priest must be willing to show his soul. "The tragic irony is that the perversion of authority, against which so many rebel, comes out of the need to do just the opposite: to hide behind status with the institution."⁴⁴

What is needed is an authority which is grounded in the inner life and found on a personal moral level. It is related to the willingness of the priest to enter into the Christian myth and to his or her willingness to embody that myth. This authority is not given so much by divine right, as by the bestowal of the community and by the nature of sacrifice and service to the community which the priest embodies. The kind of authority of which we speak is one that is intimately related to the idea which Richard Baxter's hymn expresses; the priest asks us to enter into no darker room than he or she has gone into before. The priest's authority comes from this willingness to travel into the wilderness and from the embodiment of that journey within his or her own life.

The ways in which each priest discovers the path of the liminal servant are always personal and individual. Yet, we have been provided by tradition, by the studies in anthropology and theology, some hints to the nature of the journey and of the symbolic role of the minister in that journey. I will address the character of this journey in some tentative ways in the final chapter.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

A JOURNEY OF CONVERSION

Our exploration in this paper has taken us through the history of the development of the symbol of the priest in community. It has discovered the roots of the symbol as embodied by the ancient shaman and has traced that symbol through the development of the Judeo-Christian ministry. In so doing, it has asked a question of that which is most fundamental to the minister, that of the "essential nature of ministry and its calling".

AUTHORITY-SACRAMENT

I hope that we have not suggested that what we are after is a "form" of ministry that is relevant for all times, if form connotes function. Ministry has and must always seek to discover new forms and methods for embodying God in Christ. That has been a mistake throughout our history. Many of the methods of the ancient shaman are obviously inappropriate and irrelevant for the contemporary minister. It was the mistake of both the Post-exilic scribes and of the early founders of the Disciples of Christ that they sought to discover and embody a pristine form of church and ministry.

What I do hope to do is to discover in the symbol of the priest in human consciousness a common calling and mode that will offer suggestions for a more inclusive ministry in the present. Our thesis is that there is found in the embodiment of the liminal servant as element that has by its absence led to the confusion and lack of esteem suffered by

contemporary clergy. And, it is possible to restore this image of ministry in its authoritative, unique, and empowered role without depleting the power of the laity.

The solution has depended upon the suggestion of the symbolic mode of ministry as one which provides an inner authority. E.V. Zollars raised the nature of internal authority and its method of governing earlier:

There are two ways to govern men: One is by outward restriction and one is by inward principle ... Before ... true liberty is reached inward principle must become the governing power. The law must be written on the heart. As long as law is external, man is a slave.¹

This fundamental assertion of early Disciples was not mistaken. The nature of the priest's authority when rightly held, does depend upon the inner recognition and assertion of the people. Whenever the ministry has sought to impose its power by external authority it has found its esteem wavering and its real power diminished. The mistake has been to hold that the valuation of the ministry occurs only in the rational social contract level as Campbell asserted. Our solution suggests that the ultimate rooting of the authority of the minister is found not in the nature of this functional contract, but in the internal, symbolic level of the symbol of the priest deep within the consciousness of humanity. Not only then, is the call congregational and functional, but it is also universal and symbolic. But this universal and receptive mode is no less dependent upon the assertion of the community than the functional mode. For it is only as the minister is perceived as the liminal servant that he or she discovers empowerment

¹ E.V. Zollars, The Commission Executed (Cincinnati:Standard, 1912) p. 279

and authority. And though the nature of the ministry is bi-modal it is here within the receptive mode that the ministry is rooted. And it is out of this mode that the ministry has been called again and again to reform.

In tracing the sacramental person through history, we have discovered that it was when priests lost or misused the symbolic mode that they were called to account by the laity. It is then in recovery of the receptive mode that the ministry today might find its "glory" restored. The failure today is in the loss of the vision of the ministry as liminal servants, the wilderness journeyers and in the contrasting attempts to ground the call of ministry in the functional, professional tasks. This failure has led to a lack of vision of the people as liminal journeyers as well. Those who would that journey have had to go elsewhere.

This is the situation in which we find ourselves today. If the ministry and the church are to be restored, they must find a way to restore the importance of the liminal journey. It is here that the journey of redemption and conversion can be discovered. The faithfulness to that receptive mode of which we have been speaking depends then upon its ability to operate in a way that is faithful to its symbolic portrayal. That is, it rests in the minister's faithful embodying of the shamanistic person, not by performing in the way in which the shaman performed, but in allowing his or her symbolic nature to operate fully within the consciousness of his or her community.

If we are to do that, we must understand more clearly the path of the wilderness trail. We must begin to understand the nature of our symbol to seek to embody that symbol and to understand its relationship to

the journey of the parishioner. This understanding clarifies our role as ministers in the salvation of persons. We have long struggled within the mainline denominations for ways to understand the relationship between conversion and nurture. More recently, we have shortchanged conversion, and emphasized nurture. It has seemed that our choice was between an understanding of conversion that depended upon "radical" turn about experiences and the more subtle growth of nurture which found little of the fire of which the New Testament speaks. As John Westerhoff has suggested "half of the Church has trouble getting people born and the other half raising them after they are born."² Part of my earlier argument against the current "sacrament of therapy" was that it offered very little understanding of the depth of darkness and the struggle of crisis out of which the Christian faith has understood life to emerge. Frankly no less guilty have been the liberal churches in many cases. In this criticism, we have again sought theological defenses against born again experiences and failed to discover our need to provide for conversion and new birth. Westerhoff commented, "the only reason there are any faithful Episcopalians it is because they were once Southern Baptists."³ That comment is no less true for most mainline denominations.

We have argued that early Disciples attempted to restore the church to its New Testament order. I believe that part of that attempt came out of the desire to discover the New Life which existed for the early Christian community. Though they made the mistake of identifying that new life is found in moving between the structure and the anti-struc-

² John Westerhoff, Lecture given at School of Theology at Claremont, November, 1980.

³ Ibid.

ture, the city and the wilderness. This movement is most clearly characterized for Christians by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The nature of this journey has received attention more recently from many corners, from developmental psychology, from theological and Biblical studies and from renewed focus on spiritual guidance. All of these present a related image of the journey of conversion as the journey between the city and the wilderness. The work in several of these fields is in particular debt to the work of anthropologists like Arnold van Gennep. His research has led to the development of some common "rites of passage". These are rites which are found almost universally and that "accompany every change of place, status, social position and age."⁴ More recently, Victor Turner has focused more directly on the elements of the ritual process inherent in these rite of passage. This process is central to Holmes' understanding of priest and offers some suggestions for a more clear understanding of the nature of the priests function in the ritual process.

Turner is interested in discovering the religious nature of this "passage" or movement from status to *communitas*. He distinguishes between

human life as a series and structure of status incumbencies and as a series of intervals or *limina* or passage between social experiences in this domain of "getting and spending" prestige and material resources. Some of these intervals are "sacred" and may be termed anti-structural in the social sense, for they represent a stripping or leveling of men before the transcendental.⁵

The effect of Turner's studies upon Holmes is clear. As Holmes distin-

⁴ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rite of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960)

⁵ Victor Turner, "Passages, Margins, & Poverty: Religious Symbols of *Communitas*," *Worship*, XLVI (1972) p. 390-91

guished between the wilderness and city, so too does Turner following van Gennep distinguish between structure and *communitas*. The element of *communitas* is generally appropriated by Holmes categories of anti-structure and Eros. It is both. These forms of anti-structure of *communitas* are however protected by certain forms within society which he understands as rituals. "Ritual is a metaphor for anti-structure".⁶

Turner too assesses the losses of religious symbols in a society dominated by positivism and rationalism. These have reduced ritual and its symbolism to "scarcely more than the reflection or expression of aspects of social structure, direct, or veiled or projected".⁷ Yet there is little doubt that these rituals and *limina* continue to exist as proofs that there is something beyond the profane. But if ritual is to be more than a guardian of the city and the structure it must, for Turner, recover some of the ancient inherited forms of cultural and religious life.

Three aspects of culture which he assesses as particularly rich in this antiquity as ritual symbols are: liminality, outsiderhood, and structural inferiority.⁸

Liminality is a term borrowed from van Gennep's formulation of the rites of passage. It is a passage marked by three periods. These are: separation, margin (or *limen* threshold, which suggests the felt movement over a threshold, either real or symbolic which is encountered during this period), and reaggregation or reincorporation.

The first stage of separation is marked by "symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an

6 Ibid., p. 391

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 393

earlier fixed point in the social structure or from a set of cultural conditions (a state) or from both."⁹ There is the separation from the status and social structures. The individual is usually separated from the rest of the culture, and taken to a special place.

In the second stage, the marginal or liminal period, the person is a passenger, transported. He or she is characterized by the ambiguous, the betwixt and between, with few or none of the attributes of the past or coming states. The third phase of reincorporation ends the passage. The passenger re-enters the society in a relatively stable state and is frequently, but not always bestowed a high status.

It is in the stage of liminality that "communitas emerges, if not as a spontaneous expression of sociability, at least in a cultural and normative form, stressing equality and comradeship as norms".¹⁰ The liminal person is necessarily ambiguous, for he or she is in this in between state, with no law, custom or conviction. This state is best expressed by the rich symbolism of society which likens it to: "death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness and to an eclipse of the sun or moon."¹¹

A second symbol of the anti-structure is that of the outsider. This person is the one who is in the condition of "being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system, being situationally or temporarily set apart or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behavior of status-occupying of that system."¹² The priest is one within this category. While those participating in the ritual

9 Ibid., p. 394 10 Ibid. 11 Ibid. 12 Ibid.

as liminal passengers experience a symbolic removing of status these persons occupy a more permanent symbol of that nature. He or she is one placed outside of the "structures" of society and as such is a symbol that calls others to the journey to *communitas*.

The third major symbol that is related to the anti-structure is the category of "structural inferiority". Whether permanent or in transition, this person is the one of lowest status, the outcast or the unskilled worker. Our literature is rich with these persons as symbols of the poor, the peasant, the beggar, the despised and rejected. "They have been assigned the symbolic function of representing humanity as such, without status qualification or characteristic. Here the lowest represent the human total, the extreme case most fittingly portrays the whole".¹³ The symbolic function of John Marek in the recent movie the "Elephant Man" is a striking example of this. Here, a man so distorted that he had to wear a mask to keep persons from being startled, became the symbol of gentleness and true humanity in its nakedness.

Here we see the function in the ritual passage of the communal. Turner distinguishes between two types of society. The first is the society as "structured differentiated and often hierarchical system of politico-legal economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of more or less".¹⁴ The second, that of *communitas*, "emerges in the liminal period and is a society as unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., p. 398

the general authority of the ritual leaders."¹⁵ It is an essential and generic human body without which there could be no society.

This is for Turner the picture of the anti-structure. It is always found in a dialectical movement between these two forms of society.

for individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality. The passage from lower to higher status is through a limbo of statuslessness. In such a process the opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable. The individuals life experience alternates between exposure to structure and *communitas*, and to states and transitions.¹⁶

This process provides the meaning which is inherent in the symbol of the priest. He or she is one that moves between the structure and the *communitas* journeys with others in that movement.

MINISTRY AND ITS ROLE IN CHANGE

We have argued that the contemporary minister has failed to operate as the outsider. The priest has frequently failed to identify clearly his or her role with the lower classes of society and has sought instead more "professional" skills and status. I have suggested that the role of the therapist has been all too narrow and frequently has failed to operate in ways that are Christian.

Browning has suggested as well, that the role of therapist fails to move persons through this journey which Turner outlines. The therapist frequently operates to separate liminality from structure. He says:

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 396-97

¹⁶ Victor Turner, The Ritual Process (Chicago:Aldine, 1969) p. 97

Therapeutic processes seem to call for and necessitate some kind of separation from a society's religio-cultural values and their specific embodiment in social roles, tasks and obligations. This suggests that any therapeutic process whether it be religious or secular has within it an antistructural moment to become disconnected from the total movement of the therapeutic ritual and become an end in itself. When therapeutic theories give central prominence to the values of openness, the "I-Thou" encounter spontaneity, the immediacy of experiencing and feeling, as not only a transitional dimension but as a general end, then it may well be that liminality has been severed from structure. Certain humanistic psychologies come close to making this separation.¹⁷

While I would agree that frequently there is a separation between liminality and structure in therapy today, I would argue that Browning's assessment of this separation is inadequate as well.

The failure lies in Browning's comparison of the liminal stage with the "sanctioned retreat" of which Talcott Parsons speaks. I think that Browning here fails to understand properly the radical upheaval of liminality. The ritual process begins in a place set apart. That place is originally perhaps a sanctioned retreat. But the place of liminality is later quite different. The liminal place is a place of parable: of being between and betwixt.

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.¹⁸

Such is the position of the threshold person, ambiguous and indeterminate. Though I would agree with Browning that many persons today have been left in a permanent state of liminality, but, I would argue that the function

¹⁷ Don Browning, The Moral Context of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) p. 36

¹⁸ Turner, Ritual Process, p. 95

of therapy has been to stifle that liminality rather than encourage it and journey with it. The bulk of our society spends the most of its time trying to find some kind of structure which will provide order and control to its life. I believe that most frequently pastoral counseling has functioned in favor of structure rather than of liminality.

Few persons in our society are willing to stay in the wilderness of liminality and even fewer find therapists who are willing to journey with them through that wilderness (whether they be clergy or secular). This assumption of Browning leads to our second criticism. His answer to the pastoral counselor who seeks to restore the connection between the liminal and the structure, thus completing the ritual process is totally rational. It is of the action mode. And, as we have suggested we see the the minister as the liminal servant in the receptive mode. We shall return to this later. Let us now turn to consider the nature of our argument about the wilderness of the liminal and seek to understand how that operates in the ritual process.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RITUAL PROCESS

It is here that we have been helped by the research and theory of various developmental psychologists. In the work of developmental theorists such as Erik Erikson, we have developed a growing awareness of human life as a journey that is marked by crucial stages of personal development. They have helped us understand the "ritual" process as it functions in the development of persons throughout their lives. Recently Daniel Levinson, Gail Sheehy and others have brought this development to greater awareness. From other fronts, Kohlberg has given thought to these

stages in moral development and Fowler, Keen and others to the stages in moral development. All of these have discovered from their research and its development, some paths which frequently run parallel, though they may be concerned with different perceptions.

What is central for our study is the relationship of those studies to human conversion-nurture and thus to the function of the priest in that process. They offer us some helpful insight as to the function of the ministry as liminal servant. While they do offer helpful maps as to direction of the wilderness journey, our primary purpose here is to look at the characteristics common to these "ritual passages". The help of three authors is especially relevant to this regard, Evelyn and James Whitehead and Mark Searle. The Whiteheads have been helpful in suggesting some of the ways in which the developmental stages of Erickson can be understood as "Christian Life Patterns."¹⁹ Mark Searle has given particular attention to the way these developmental journeys can be understood as "Journeys of Conversion".²⁰

Though we have as a society understood, even if haphazardly, the various rites of passage through which we move as children and adolescents, we have failed to understand their significance for the adult. The Whiteheads comment:

This implicit cultural expectation is that adulthood is a relatively stable state, achieved, once and for all, after the unsettled time of childhood and adolescence. Two aspects of this assumption are particularly influential in the cultural expectation: First, adulthood is expected to be relatively stable. The changes of childhood and adolescence, which though disturbing are judged to be normal have come to

¹⁹ Evelyn and James Whitehead, Christian Life Patterns (Garden City, NY:Doubleday, 1979)

²⁰ Mark Searle, "Journey of Conversions," Worship, XLV:I (1980) p. 6

an end. Development is assumed to be over. And, second, this stable state is achieved once and for all. There is an expectation of permanence. In such an expectation, change will be experienced as a scandal, an unanticipated irregular occurrence and deterioration from an ideal.²¹

What must be sought, say the Whiteheads, is a more continuous development model for adulthood. So far it seems consistent with our favorite, nurture. But, nurture does not bring in the kingdom nor the individual soul. For, there is, (and here is our argument with Browning) a deep experience of crisis, a crisis which has movement at its heart and provides the kind of uneasiness with which one can not live for long. The choice is advance or retreat. The understanding of conversion in this kind of transition is understood as: consisting of the successful negotiation of crisis or change: or "a form of passage or transition whereby the person may pass through to a new lease on life and enter into a new set of relationships with himself, the world around him and life itself."²² The journey of conversion is:

a journey through crisis, using the term "crisis" here to refer not only to moments of alarm and anxiety but in the broader sense of any turning point or moment of change. A person who was able to live creatively through such crisis or conversion would progressively become, in St. Paul's phrase, "a new creature".²³

Our final task in the paper is then to understand what is involved in this transition and to see more clearly how the minister is related to that.

CRISIS AND KAIROS

The understanding of the developmental theories is that there are operative within humanity passages which must be run if the person is

22 Searle, p. 36

23 Ibid.

to mature, whether they are marked by rituals or not. These passages are experienced as crises. These crises are points of radical disorientation and restlessness. They are not of our own choice, but are perceived as something that is thrust upon us. They do not touch just a part of our lives leaving the rest in tack; but, rather they call one's entire person into question.

Searle remarks that:

When we look at the sort of crises in life which offer the opportunity for real change, we find that they run the whole gamut from major upheavals, matters of life and death to some quite trivial incident. When we try to set them in context, however, we find that what they all have in common is what every good story needs: a beginning, a middle and an end.²⁴

Searle's suggestion puts the experience of crisis within the convenient form of a story in a way that shows its parallel to the rites of passage which we have already discussed. The person experiencing the crisis is the storyteller and the minister is the story-listener. Though there is in the symbol of the minister, as we will see, the living story. The story of the crisis has three acts: the setting out, the adventure and the return.

The beginning of the story tells of the way things were and of how the seed of the circumstance was sown; from which the ensuing events then sprang. The story goes on to tell of how that original state of things came to be altered or put into jeopardy and it concludes by relating how these events were resolved in a new state of affairs.²⁵

The three acts in which it is then defined, the setting out the adventure of crisis and the return can be easily compared to the rites of passage steps of purification, liminality and reaggregation. For both there are subplots and greater complexities. Yet one describes the symbol

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

of the event and rite through which the event occurs (ritual process) and the other describes it from the inside out. So for the experience of crisis the stress here is on a clearer understanding of that which guides the movement of passage.

In understanding the "Setting Out", Searle suggests that there is a difference in understanding the story lived and the story told. For the story told there is a definite beginning point whereas with the story lived, there is difficulty discerning this point at times. The beginning is not one we chose, but is thrust upon us. And yet there is still usually a place, a marker event, that can usually be identified at the onset of the story. It may be the death of a loved one or the change of jobs. Or it may take the form of something more simple like that of the conversion of Gautama Buddha, "when he saw as if for the first time, an old man, a sick man, and a dead man."²⁶

Whatever this setting out, what is clear is that after that even like the Buddah, nothing else is quite the same. Searle describes what happens:

things begin to change--or we begin to change--quite imperceptibly. We find ourselves becoming increasingly restless, dissatisfied in a vague sort of way, laboring under a growing feeling of frustration, more and more oppressed by doubt about the meaning or worthwhileness of what we are doing or the way we are living. Things are not what they used to be. Something has gone wrong and with it our sense of peace, and of being at home in the world.²⁷

Things then, are changed. As the Whiteheads reflect on these crises they suggest that they can be discovered in the pilgrimage of crises. The religious event of conversion.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 37

²⁷ Ibid.

Crises by their very structure invite an adult to a re-examination and even a reorientation of her or his life.

The believer can recognize in the patterns of human growth and in the critical periods of disruption, loss and gain--special opportunities for religious growth. In the disorientation of crisis the believer can experience the inbreaking of God, who challenges conventional insights and plans; in the journey beyond the crisis the believer can experience the grace of deliverance, the gift of being empowered to live a new and better life with God.²⁸

As one moves into the crisis, the developmental theorists suggest also, images of darkness. We speak of being in a dark woods, in dark tunnels or troubled waters or in the dark night. Suddenly we find ourselves in the midst of the dark and can't remember how we got there. Dante tells of this discovery:

In the middle of life's journey
I went astray from the straight road
And awoke to find myself in a dark wood.²⁹

This awakening is characteristic of the onset of crisis. Disorientation in this darkness arises from the experience of discontinuity and loss of control. The discovery of this loss, this darkness, is the beginning of the journey. I believe few persons today come to grips with this pervasive feeling of discontinuity of which we spoke in the first chapter. Contrary to Browning, I would suggest that many persons get to this point of division between the setting out of the story and the adventure of crisis and turn back, the wilderness is too frightening alone.

For the person who decides to push on, the guiding image is death and rebirth. Marris, and Searle assess the nature of this period as one

28 Whitehead and Whitehead, p. 58

29 Dante, Inferno (New York:Mentor Books, 1954) 1:1-3

of bereavement. There is an effort to identify what is being lost and what must be given up in order to go through the crisis. As the Whiteheads explain, the task is dual, one must: "identify and accept the loss while reinterpreting one's life so that the positive value of the lost object survives."³⁰ This loss and searching continues to be central and produces an ambivalence. But the ambivalence is not merely negative, there is within it a potency of disorder. "The chaos and disorder of a transitional state clear space for innovative ways of reordering the self."³¹

The grieving person is then, faced with the decision of either moving through the grieving process to discover something beyond, or blocking the grieving process.

The failure to negotiate the grief crises takes three forms says Marris. In the first, grief is delayed. "The persons attempts to overlook the loss by becoming busily occupied in a range of distracting activities."³² This delayed grief will often surface as a delayed or exaggerated response at a later time. The second ineffective response to grief is that of inhibiting grief. "Here the pain of the loss is not confronted directly but is displaced into other symptoms."³³ But the denial or the inhibiting of loss closes off the possibilities for renewal which lie within the situation.

The third ineffective response to grief is "chronic grief." The person here is overwhelmed by the loss and slips into static depression."³⁴

30 Whitehead and Whitehead, p. 53

31 Ibid., p. 54

32 Ibid., p. 56

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

The person attempts to stop time and puts all his or her energies into fending off the full effect of the loss. This is I would argue the stance of many persons in our culture. Fearing the loss of moving on and suffering from previous loss, they slip into the depression of chronic grief.

The more positive response is to work through the grief. Searle suggests that there is something of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' five stages of grief in every serious crisis, as it moves from denial, through blaming, anger and resentment to powerless and depression and finally realization and surrender to the truth. The movement is towards a deep passivity. One allows the crisis to take control. There is an increasing vulnerability, an acceptance of that over which one has no control. One surrenders to truth, to the truth of life and the God of life. There is in this moment the encounter with God. Searle tells of Tolstoy's short story the Death of Ivan Illych.

"The story tell of a dying judge who desperately clings to the illusion that since he had always acted *comme il faut*, living a respected and respectable life, his life had been good. Even when he can no longer evade the fact that he is dying, he will not, indeed cannot, admit that his life has not been all that it should have been. He is hardly able to articulate this is a rational form, nor grasp it intellectually. Instead he has the feeling that he is being forced down into a deep, dark hole, thrust into a black sack by some "unseen, invincible power" against which he struggles all his might. Only when he finally succumbs to this invisible power, gives up his struggle of self-justification and yields to the inevitability of the truth--only then is he released. "Suddenly some dark force smote him in the chest, making it harder for him to breathe: he sank through the hole and there at the bottom was light..." "No, it was all wrong" he said to himself, 'but no matter.'

With that came the realization too, that it could be set right; and he was suddenly aware of himself as released from pain, his fear and his lies. Someone was kissing his hand. He opened his eyes and saw his son. He felt sorry for him. He wanted to ask forgiveness of his family, to bless them and forgive them, but he was by now too weak. Even that he had to surrender: "... too weak to correct himself, he waved his hand, knowing that He whose understanding mattered would understand."

Surrender to the truth: not to some abstract truth or matter of fact, but to the Truth of his life, to the God of his life. That was

the turning point. The pain of his cancer was still there; the moment of death was only minutes away. Nothing had changed and yet all had changed. He no longer fought the pain: "Let it be" he said to himself. "And death where is it?" he asked. "He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. 'Where is it? What death?' There was no fear because there was no death. In place of death there was light."³⁵

In every crisis there is latent the possibility for conversion, that is a dying to one's previous life and perceptions of one's world and a recognition that these long held beliefs are not true. This moment of surrender is the point of conversion. We are, says Levinson, offered two possibilities: "A man may feel bereft and have the experience of suffering irreparable loss. He may also feel liberated, free to develop more flexible values and to admire others in a more genuine less idealizing way."³⁶ The difference comes between the surrendering to something and someone. It is in surrendering to "the invisible" force as did Ilych that makes the difference.

This suggests the special nature of crisis for the inbreaking of God.

In the disorientation of a crisis the believer can experience the inbreaking of God, who challenges conventional insights and plans. In the journey through and beyond the pain of crisis the believer can experience the grace of deliverance, the gift of being empowered to live a new and better life with God.³⁷

This is, suggests Searle, the point of conversion. We have the sense of being saved from the abyss, the darkness. It may not be a single event, yet we are aware of a new life that has begun to draw us, to attract us. And there is felt within us a deeper sense of peace beyond the chaos.

³⁵ Searle, p. 41

³⁶ Daniel Levinson, et, al., The Seasons of a Man's Life (New York: Knopf, 1977) pp. 192-93, note 2

³⁷ Whitehead and Whitehead, p. 38

The sense of the futility and disorientation gives way to meaningfulness. One is in connection with what Turner has called *communitas*. This awareness is a turning point toward return:

Such a turning point, buried and lost perhaps in the very depths of one's desperation; such a change of heart marked by a secret surrender to the ground of one's being, to the God of one's life; such a conversion, not so much willed by oneself as wrought in one's depths such a conversion marks the beginning of the return journey.³⁸

Now the journeyer begins to see things in a new light. The questions of the "adventure of crisis" which tortured us are not so much answered as transcended. The "dread of loneliness is converted into a quiet joy of solitude. One is given a new vision, a new revelation and the grace of self-transcendence and new life and joy."³⁹ The loss has been transformed into gain. There is a new wholeness and the spirit of the *communitas*--the anti-structure--is present in healing and whole ways.

The journeyer in our story has found the proper symbols along the way to help him or her to maintain the presence in the midst of disorientation and to hope for and discover the new vision. It is the task of ritual to provide those points of symbol which enable this journey.

But, how then does the priest as the sacramental person become the liminal servant in this journey? The Whiteheads suggest three functions:

Those who seek to minister or assist adults in crisis can nurture growth in three specific ways: by structuring protective environments within which the confusing ambiguity can be probed rather than avoided, by forecasting a successful resolution of the crisis, and by supplying concrete methods of decision making and personal planning.⁴⁰

Each of these suggest the nature of the liminal servant. There is needed the journeyer within the wilderness, the symbolic function of the outsider

38 Searle, p. 42 39 Ibid., p. 43

40 Whitehead and Whitehead, p. 54

and the skilled planner within the action mode. But, all these center in the function of the priest as the one who employs and embodies the ritual. The adequacy of the ritual's function correlates to the success of the journey. And though there is always a personal element of individual difference in the embodiment of the ritual, the success of its function can be forecast by some indicators.

As Searle looks at the function of the ritual in the journey of which we have been speaking, he provides some of these indicators. They serve for us as not only a suggestion for the way the minister employs the rituals of the faith, but also for the way the minister embodies his or her ritual stance as the priest. We will look at these in closing as some guidelines for the minister as symbol and as liminal servant and indicate some points of departure for further study. I hope that these can serve as indicators of the necessity of further development of both the functional skills of the liminal servant and the receptive embodiment of the sacraments, both in his or her person and in other forms must always look first at his/her origin in Christ. As Searle says:

It is important to bear in mind, that in the Christian dispensation there is only one basic sacrament, Christ himself. The journey of the Son of God is described by John as a journey from the Father into this world, and a journey from this world back to the Father through the Cross. The story of Jesus is for the believer, the revelation of the meaning of his own experience of crisis. It is the Good News of the otherwise terrifying experience of death in all its forms. It is the promise of victory: Even if you have to die, keep faithful and I will give you the crown of life for your prize. Rev. 2:10⁴¹

The minister of the sacraments and the minister as sacramental person must always understand him/herself, first, as the bearer of Christ

⁴¹ Searle, p. 48

as we suggested in the beginning. As such, the primary metaphor of death and resurrection must be born. This metaphor through the embodiment of the ministry and other sacraments then provides this understanding of the connection between conversion and nurture of which we have been speaking. It provides a firm argument against the assertion that conversion is a once felt or twice felt experience. The suggestion of the Christ sacrament in the developmental understanding is one which offers a different concept of this conversion.

It is said that a coward dies many times, but perhaps it would be truer to say that a coward never dies until Death wrests his life from him, whereas the hero undergoes death and is raised to life repeatedly. Certainly we are only baptized once, but that pattern of dying to an old world and being raised up to new life is one which repeats itself over and over again in the lifelong journey from death to life, from this world to the Father. In the words of Thomas Merton, "We are not converted only once in our lives, but many times; and this endless series of large and small conversions, inner revolutions, leads to our transformation in Christ."⁴²

The priest is first of all and finally one who embodies to persons that kind of transformation and reveals openly and honestly his or her death and resurrection. Every act of worship, and sacrament embody and call the Christian to this type of lived parable.

But, the sacraments frequently fail to enable such conversion. There are negative aspects, what Holmes refers to as Demonic aspects of this sacramental nature as well. Holmes details that in his chapter on the Demonic side of the sacramental person in The Priest in Community.⁴³ Searle in his study provides a more focused listing of the dangers of ritual and sacrament that apply equally well to the priest. They suggest

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Urban T. Holmes, III, The Priest in Community (New York: Seabury, 1978) Chapter 5, pp. 122-45

the tenuous nature of the liminal servant. He or she is one who seeks to call the person to the liminality of the anti-structure and also provide safe locus of the encounter of the transcendent. But he or she can also be party to the danger of manipulation of the sacred and to becoming a safe harbor in which to bypass the wilderness rather than confront it. Both of these have been central to our critique of recent 'sacraments of therapy'. They have all too often either restabilized the person, denying the potency of grace, or have cut the person loose from all structure and myth, leaving no meaning for the journeyer seeking God.

STAGES OF READINESS IN THE JOURNEY

Searle suggests that the ritual can be used to foster this truly sacramental journey of the creative conversion of dying and rising. It comes down to the importance of readiness, or what Whiteheads have discussed as pacing. The central function of the spiritual guide of Christian tradition has always been grounded in this notion. Within the inner process of conversion and the unfolding ritual process there are, for Searle, four moments of readiness that merge into a single movement of transformation.

The first stage of readiness consists in "coming to terms with what one is actually going through."⁴⁴ This stage has traditionally been understood as the stage of confession and purification. It is the meditative element of contemplative prayer and is says Thomas Merton the one which is

⁴⁴ Searle, p. 42

frequently passed over too quickly. Elizabeth O'Connor has offered a new understanding (or at least renewed) of confession that speaks of this stage. The stage is, first of all, a coming to terms with that which one is experiencing. It is an understanding of the fear and motivation of the crisis. What can happen in confession is that we can first discover our false images about ourselves. We begin to discover the idol we have made. And we begin to realize that the fear or crisis within us is really the prophet of our inner self warning us that we must give up our old path.

She suggests that the alienation which grips so many today may reflect the loss of the ancient rite of confession. She speaks of what that confession actually is:

We must give up our illusions about the kind of people we are. No one is going to do this, however, unless he has come to believe that beneath the unreal facade there exists another self that can indeed breathe and live. We do not give up false concepts without at least beginnings of a faith in an unseen, perishable kingdom within. Confession starts us on the journey towards that lost Kingdom.⁴⁵

Here the function of the minister of any "person" within the congregation is to help objectify the struggles of the person, so that the illusions about who they are can be recognized. Such confession begins to put us in touch with more of our world, it gives us not only the illusion of who we are, but also a brief vision of who we can become. The function here of confession, is to place oneself in that statusless position or the position of the lowest class with the hope that in so doing we might discover the real nature of what it means to be human.

The importance here for the minister is clear. There is, I believe, a direct correlation between the willingness and possibility of

⁴⁵ Elizabeth O'Connor, Search for Silence, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972) p. 20

the person to confess and the degree to which the priest embodies the role of the "outsider" and low status person. This embodiment suggests not so much the physical nature of the outsiderhood (though we must always remain in touch with that element) but the spiritual nature. The priest must be one who finally portrays honestly and openly his or her own final dependence upon the grace of God, not upon any other status. This realization in the minister is the perception of compassion and connects the confessing person with the "comunitas", and the reality of God's forgiveness as well. So Bonhoeffer confesses:

Who can give us the certainty that, in the confession and the forgiveness of our sins, we are not dealing with ourselves but with the living God? God gives us this certainty through the brother. Our brother breaks the circle of self-deception. A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person. As long as I am by myself in the confession of my sins everything remains in the dark, but in the presence of a brother the sin has to be brought into the light.⁴⁶

We must, if we are to enable the journey of conversion, find ways for this type of confession to occur. It doesn't have to occur with the priest and the priest has no power of forgiveness any greater than that of other Christians except that he or she may to a particular degree (in his or her symbolic, receptive mode) embody to the confessor the forgiveness of God.

The strength of the pastoral counseling movement is that it has frequently provided the forgiving side of this movement of confession. But it has often failed to act as the parable of Christ in confession. There is in confession also the realization of what one is not and what one should be. There is what Whitehead has described as a felt "ought-

⁴⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Cited in *ibid.*, p. 69

ess". As we understand this oughtness within the journey of conversion it suggests a fundamental change in the perception of the person's world and their relationship to that world.

We are particularly helped to understand this by Dominic Crossan and others who have detailed the importance of the parable in the Christian gospel.

As Crossan considers the theology of story he distinguishes between five typologies which are part of the spectrum of the story.

Myth establishes the world. Apologue defends the world. Action investigates world. Satire attacks world. Parable subverts the world.⁴⁷

Crossan describes the particular way in which Jesus' parables related to the inbreaking of the kingdom of God.

I would suggest that the connection (between Jesus' parables and the kingdom of God) is summed up in the maxim: Parables give God room. The parables of Jesus are not historical allegories telling us how God acts with mankind; neither are they moral example-stories telling us how to act before God and towards one another. They are stones which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of story itself. They remove our defenses and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such moments does the kingdom of God arrive.⁴⁸

The priest as liminal servant must in the active mode through confession enable the persons to make space for discovering the parable within their lives at that point. Such a function consists largely in the enabling of the paradoxical struggle of the crisis to emerge. The work of a number of persons in dream and meditation imagery provide some possibilities for the persons encounter with these paradoxes. Insights

⁴⁷ John Dominic Crossan, The Dark Interval (Niles, IL:Argus Communications, 1975) p. 9

⁴⁸ Ibid., 121

from the world of the "therapy of paradox" have obviously some help here. But, again, the discovery is found not so much within the rational, active mode, but as the person is able to enter into the receptive mode of the wilderness and anti-structure. Here the active function of the priest is in providing images which emerge from the wilderness of the persons' crisis.

But, as always the movement of the journey is toward the wilderness of the receptive mode and so the answers are found largely there. And, they center around the person of Christ. For, he not only told parables, but as Crossan reminds us, "the parabler becomes the parable. Being no longer a singer, but a song." "Jesus announced the kingdom of God in parables, but the primitive church announced Jesus as the Christ, the Parable of God."⁴⁹ The cross becomes the parable. The minister who is the liminal servant, if he or she is to be faithful to this mode, must embody the image of death and resurrection in his or her own life.

This entire process of purification, confession and discovery of the parable must be lived by the person in crisis. It cannot be short-circuited. Christ did not come to save us from the experience of dying but to lead us through death to life. Searle accounts a number of examples of such a transformation. These include:

One who is seriously ill needs to be allowed and encouraged really to work through the feelings of despondency, outrage and humiliation which are the natural concomitants of being struck down by serious illness. A penitent needs time to feel his guilt and to work through false guilt feelings to discovery of where his guilt really lies. Two people who fall in love and plan to marry need to purify and deepen their motivation, to come to some awareness of what they are

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 124

being asked to leave behind, just as much as would-be convert needs to purify his intentions and appreciate the cost of discipleship before he can be admitted to baptism.⁵⁰

In all of these situations the fundamental question is what am I being asked to give up, and the beginning of the discovery of the vision of what we have to gain.

The second moment of readiness would come, only when the person has reached some "adequate realization of the need to face the truth of his life; whether that truth be opened up in a situation of sickness or guilt, ... of death or call to ministry. The call to die (at least a little),"⁵¹ This stage of readiness is found when the person standing on the edge of the wilderness asks for a word of faith from the community of faith. This raises the role of the community as well as the minister. That role is given clarity by the Whiteheads. They detail four possible responses of the community to persons who find themselves in the midst of crisis. The first is to ignore them. The response of the persons around the journeyer is something like, "They're fine, don't worry about a thing." "It is often the community's own embarrassment and discomfort that motivates this response."⁵² No less true is this for the priest. He or she takes the posture that somehow if we ignore it it will go away. The individual and the priest are protected from the crisis instead of working through the crisis. I have suggested that this response is in part a result of our own failure as ministers to be persons in touch with the depths of the liminal world. That is why we must seek again to restore

50 Searle, p. 52

51 Ibid., p. 53

52 Whitehead and Whitehead, p. 56

our devotional life. The points in ministering where we "bottom out" and try to move persons back to the comfort of the city should be carefully assessed. For we can often discover within them suggestions of our own wilderness journeys calling us to move.

A second response of the community, say the Whiteheads, is to distract. We try to keep the person busy, send them away. Often this takes the form of banishment. The separation of persons in hospitals, isolated from the community (both in mental hospitals and others) are ways for us to ignore and banish the person in crisis. Again it removes the source of liminality or *communitas* from our carefully structured safe world. Such a process occurs wherever conflict and crisis appears. Within the church our response has been to distract attention from it or attempt to ignore it. Such a process we would suggest denies the inbreaking of the kingdom for the church and is a signal failure of the church in her ministry to individuals in crisis.

Two areas of study are here important. The first are studies in church management which seek to employ and use the "potency of disorder" in creative ways rather than to ignore it. The studies by Systems theorists and others have enabled us to see the way this can operate. The second area of attention focuses on the drop out. John Savage has developed a theory which is based on interviews with the active church members that have dropped out of the church. These interviews cause him to theorize that frequently the member encounters a crisis in his or her lives and the church often fails to minister effectively to that person in crisis. The most frequent tactic is to screen the person out. And though the person cries for help, the cry is ignored. When this happens,

the person is in such a state of anxiety and disequilibrium that he or she drops out of the church and seeks help elsewhere. His studies have suggested that over 75% of these dropouts could identify an anxiety provoking event, or what we have here called a marker event. These events were sufficiently painful that they created enough force for the person to leave his or her community of support.⁵³

The third response of crisis is to blame the victim. The person is blamed for being in the crisis. The attention focuses upon the erratic behavior of the victim. Though the minister may be more sensitive that is not always the case. "The effect of this selective focus upon the erratic behavior as opposed to the enduring positive qualities of the persons personality serves to predict failure rather than the successful negotiation of the crisis."⁵⁴

A fourth response, that the Whiteheads find more developmentally sound, is based on the conviction that a crisis is best deal with in the persons' usual environment. "The response is to foreclose on exit, to keep the individual within the supportive bounds of the community and selectively attend to the person's best hopes rather than his or her erratic behavior or pessemistic attitudes."⁵⁵ While it forecasts a successful resolution to the crisis and focusing on these positive attitudes, the stance does not ignore the actions that are harmful and behavior that is ineffective, but in a caring way challenges rather than blames.

This fourth response of forecasting a successful resolution is

53 Ibid., p. 57

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

that which Searle suggests as central to this stage. We must first seek to locate the individual's story within the larger context of the story of faith, and salvation history. This task is to place the person's story within the range of the gospel story. It is always a word both of judgment and of promise:

a word like that which came to Abraham, to leave his father's house and to set out for a land that God would show him. The community's word of faith does not deny or ignore his experience, but helps him to interpret it as a call to conversion, call to faith, to surrender to the God who leads him in his life: a pillar of obscurity to his waking mind, but a pillar of fire in the darkness of his unknowing.⁵⁶

Having discovered her place within the gospel story, the individual can now begin to experience the grace of redemption from the darkness. The individual who left the security of the structure of their previous stage of development or life perception can now begin to see the edges of the new stage or vision. Such a discovery moves us into the realm of Kairos of God; where we discover the inbreaking of the kingdom. We experience the cloud of unknowing and are by it called to an "obedience of faith." "An obedience to which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals."⁵⁷ This moves the individual into the third moment of readiness. But, before we move to consider that, one further comment about the second moment. The recent studies in developmental psychology suggest that one can do more than simply forecast a successful solution to the pilgrimage. One of the primary functions of the ministry in contrast to other disciplines is to provide images of wholeness which call persons into account and offer promise for resolution of their crisis.

⁵⁶ Searle, p. 53

⁵⁷ Ibid.

If the minister is to bear the sacrament of God's presence in a significant way, then he or she must provide the gospel images with all their force allowing them to speak words of judgment as well as promise. Only then will the priest be experienced finally as the "angel" or bearer of God's grace. We have more recently been given help by the developmental theorists suggestion that conversion doesn't occur all at once. Fowler has for example given us tentative "maps" for the faith journey which can enable us to help persons locate themselves with the journey of faith.⁵⁸ Kohlberg has done the same thing in moral development⁵⁹ and the Whiteheads and others in the field of general adult developmental crises.⁶⁰ All of these provide sketches of the direction of wilderness journeys in several perspectives which can be valuable for the minister as he or she seeks to discover new stages of development. They offer a movement or journey which I believe is more in line with the gospel story than many current therapies. All of these end in a movement toward what we have called a "transcendent servanthood." They move towards the more universal and self-transcendent and in so doing enable the person to become more an authentic individual, bearing integrity. Their movement is always one which is felt as crisis and promise. As such it can be called forth by putting the persons in touch with their perception of the inadequacies of the currently or formerly held position and by providing images of a higher stage. A sketch of the different stages will be found in noted references.

⁵⁸ Jim Fowler and Sam Keen, Life Maps (Waco, TX:Word, 1979)

⁵⁹ Lawrence Kohlberg, "Continuities & Discontinuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development Revisited" in Baltes and in Schaie (eds.) Life-Span Developmental Psychology: Research & Theory (New York: Holt, 1972)

⁶⁰ Whitehead and Whitehead

These are, however, only descriptive (tentative maps) of what seems to the experience of individuals in this "ritual process" which we are describing. And, as the third moment of readiness makes clear, this movement is always one which finally is transformed by the mystery of God. It is as the Eastern spiritual guides would suggest, a journey into darkness, into unknowing. It is finally a surrendering to this presence. The sacramental or liturgical symbol of this is found in baptism as the dying to one's old self and the rising in obedience to God. This rising is never experienced as clearly as the stages would have us believe. But, the skills of the minister in the active mode are to help the person formulate what that new image of obedience will look like. We must help the persons formulate a new structure out of the vision of *communitas*. That function as one enters marriage is in this regard clearer than in other rites. Here we apply our skills of counseling and ritual to enable the couple to envision their new role and to provide them with as many skills as possible to successfully negotiate a rich life as married persons. We must discover more concrete ways and provide clearer and more intentional rite of passage for other areas of crisis. The needs for this within the crises of life in divorce, death of loved ones, moving, loss of job, retirement, the empty nest, adolescence, and others must be addressed with greater seriousness. And, we must discover as well more skills in enabling the person to negotiate the terrain of faith development and moral development by providing them with specific skills of discipleship in these areas.

This moves us to the final moment of readiness. A practice of the Sioux Indians is descriptive for that moment. When a man was desirous of having a vision he was led out to spend three days and three nights alone

on a mountain top. Afterwards, he returned to recount what he had seen and the wise were able to interpret it for him and for the people. Then they gave thanks to God, for they said, "You have established a relationship with this young man and through this relationship will bring strength to his people." In much the same way in the initiation of adults the rite charges the newly baptized to "enter into a closer relation with the faithful and bring them renewed vision and a new impetus." What is suggested here is the dual nature of community. First, the community is to be present to support and to celebrate the return of the pilgrim, but the second side is that these persons have a "duty arising out of that experience to share with the community the effects of their own new life and vision." The trueness of the pilgrim's journey is always discovered in their willingness to serve. "We have passed out of death and into life, and of this we can be sure because we love our brother."

The hallmark of genuine experience of conversion in the Christian faith is seen in:

Compassion for the poor and the weak, willingness to forgive and to heal, concern for the building up of a community of justice and peace ... Such a one has known the death of Jesus, who gave his life as a ransom for many. His ethical commitment springs not so much from obedience to the law as from the knowledge that to some degree he was lost and is now found, was dead and has been restored to life. "Love the stranger, for you were a stranger in the land of Egypt."⁶¹

This is the fundamental nature of the embodiment of Christ in the community and the minister must always call forth that embodiment in the whole community. The process of the "journey of conversion" always leads then to the servanthood of Christ.

⁶¹ Searle, pp. 54-55

This is the pilgrimage of faith from life to death and back again that is for the Christian the way of life and conversion. The ministry of the priest as embodying that journey and enabling that journey will take many forms, but they will always discover their meaning at a receptive level in this movement.

ARENAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Many questions remain for the liminal servant. These include practical, functional questions such as polity, education, administration and ecclesiology. For Disciples the most important question left may be the one raised by our discussion in Chapter Four regarding support. If the minister in the tradition of Disciples, and other congregationally based traditions, is to be able to be the liminal servant, he or she must be free from the restraints of the "functional, congregational, professional call." Wayne Bryant's study has made some important progress for clergy concerned to establish a more healthy relationship with their congregations. A clarifying of the responsibilities and authority for various areas of ministry would be helpful in this relationship.

A second important question which remains involves the nature of this ministry to the whole life of the church. "How is the embodiment of Christ present throughout the life of the church?" My answer here suggests a restoration of the liturgical year as central. The work of John Westerhoff and others in the liturgy and its symbolic function provide, (especially for those traditions which are largely non-liturgical) suggestions for making the church year a vital living bearer of the Christian vision. I believe that the missing element of the wilderness and recep-

tive mode is no less the true for the whole church than for the ministry. Though many mainline denominations have often done a good job of rational, active modes of education, there has been a noticeable lack in its intuitive, receptive, imaginative embodiment. Westerhoff's suggestions will enable us to explore the unity between conversion and nurture, which I addressed above, in a more intentional way in the life of the whole community.

A third area which calls for further exploration is, I believe, the one which the receptive mode of ministry when most successful rests, that of the minister's own spiritual development and his or her ability to act as spiritual guide. The section of the bibliography of spirituality offers some possible points of departure for this journey. The study by Kenneth Leech, Soul Friend, is helpful in offering an overall picture of some contemporary possibilities for the spiritual guide. This area has never been totally dropped from the role of the minister, no matter how rational or functional the ministry seemed or how inadequate were many of the clergy. The ministers who were most faithful and the greatest servants to God's people through out the history of the church have been those whose lives have been deeply grounded within a deep spiritual journey. These ministers, regardless of the appropriateness of their functional skills, have embodied Christ in a way that was healing and transforming for their congregations. The tradition of the sacramental person throughout this history has been responsible for keeping alive within human consciousness, the symbolic nature of the priest as bearer of God. If we are to restore the authority and esteem of ministry today, it is there that we must begin. We must restore the image of ministers as the ones

who are set aside to embody the human task in a special way, as they become liminal servants of the wilderness.

Finally, though the stress here has been to recover the missing elements of the receptive mode of ministry, and this has meant we have focused more on the movement of that mode, there are, within the active mode, skills and maps which can help the liminal servant. These are suggested by the developmental psychologists. Two of the studies which offer the most for clergy are the study of the Whiteheads' and of Fowler and Keen. These are listed in the bibliography. They offer important landmarks as well as directions for the minister who is interested in enabling his parishioners to traverse the crises of life in ways that are redemptive and salvific. They offer final visions which both respect the profound nature of crisis and sin and move in the direction of a person that is the self-transcendent servant of whom we have been speaking.

The transcendent servant which has traversed the pages of this study is clearly not original in discussions of the theology of ministry. Such a ministry has been called for throughout the history of ministry. But that servant does for me speak of the ultimate grounding of the Christian ministry in ways which few others do. It has been important for me in this study to discover a more firm footing for a ministry which is just beginning. It has been heartening for me as one brought up within the Disciple' tradition to discover again that the footing rests in a recovery of that which was most basic in Christ's ministry as well. We have often addressed that ministry, historically, and yet the recent loss of esteem has caused us to stray from its

grounding.

Henri Nouwen has reminded us that the ministry is always and finally lived out as The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in the Memory of Christ. And it is with words from that book that I close:

The minister as a living memory of God's great deeds in history is called to heal by reminding people of their wounded past and by connecting their wounds with the wounds of all humanity, redeemed by the suffering of God in Christ ... The temptation is strong to ask the "how" question: How do I become a living memory of God; how do I accept and connect; how do I lift up the individual story into the divine story? These questions are temptations insofar as they avoid the more basic question: Who am I as living memory of God? The main question indeed is not a question of doing, but a question of being. When we speak about the minister as a living reminder of God, we are not speaking about a technical specialty which can be mastered through the acquisition of specific tools, techniques and skills, but about a way of being which embraces the totality of life ... a way of living in the spirit by which all we are and all we do becomes a form of reminding. ... we must walk in his presence as Abraham did ... This is powerfully expressed by the nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox staretz, Theophan the Recluse:

Into every duty a God-fearing heart must be put, a heart constantly permeated by the thought of God; and this will be the door through which the soul will enter into active life. ... The essence is to be established in the remembrance of God and to walk in his presence.⁶²

⁶² Henri Nouwen, The Living Reminder: Service & Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ (New York: Seabury, 1977) pp. 27-28

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